



BELIEF AND IDENTITY THROUGH THE PRODUCTION OF MUSIC IN THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC LITURGY: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF LA SAINTE FAMILLE
PARISH UNITY'S YOUTH MUSICAL ENSEMBLE, SHAÏDA

By

© Sébastien Adrien Després

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ABSTRACT

Shaïda is a musical ensemble created by Francophone New Brunswick youths aspiring to “liven up” the Roman Catholic liturgy with their singing and instruments (from violins to electric guitars and drum kits). The group, which typically figures 15-20 participants during a typical Sunday Obligation Mass and attracts parishioners from all over the province, has since 1998 attracted over 100 members, mostly of Acadian descent.

This thesis is an (auto)ethnography of Shaïda. I explore members’ motivations, the meaning of style, youths’ response to [youth-created, youth-centered] opportunities for involvement, the significance of ‘youth space,’ and how participation fosters a sense of belonging and community. Shaïda’s music, style, fashion, performance, and genre are explored thoroughly as well.

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À à Mam pi 'Pa.

Merci pour votre amour, votre support,
votre input, votre commitment, pi votre
décision de vous offrir aux jeunes comme
piliers pour les soutenir, les aimer, les
guider pi les valoriser.

Nat, Jo, My, I hope qu'on saura un jour
être de tels modèles.

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PREAMBLE

Sunday, 9:22AM; Cocagne, New Brunswick.

My father Adrien arrives stressed. And late. As usual. "There's always something." A phone call to be made. A last look at the television screen to see who's in the lead on race days. A chore Donia, his wife (my mother) had asked him to do and he'd put off until the minute after the last one. He hurriedly parks illegally in the only handicap-reserved parking space in the church parking lot in order to save time and rushes inside, where he quickly makes an apologetic nod to Alvin, who has been working to prepare the sound equipment for ten minutes already. Adrien and Alvin make a number of hurried trips from the confessional-turned-into-equipment-storage space to the front of the church. Whenever they cross paths between loads, they discuss the day's choice of song, the number of youths who will attend, and the equipment necessary for the performance.

Late myself, I help the bring the last of the pieces to the front, and while Alvin is unrolling the snake from the old Canadian Tire hose caddy we had gotten for my mother's garden, I complain about their laziness in trying to use as little equipment as possible. "Why don't you set it up the best way and try to get the best sound you can instead of always doing it half-assed?" My father, immediately on the defensive, brusquely retorts, "We would if someone helped us take it down after!" He is irritated at me for having suggested that he is lazy, chiefly because my suggestion reminds him of the tedious job of putting everything back after the Mass – with no one lending a hand.

Jessica is the first youth to arrive, followed by Stéphane and his brother P'tit Jacques. They take their seats at the front of the choir risers and watch us plug in the last of the ¼-inch wires into their respective places. Ten minutes later, most of the vocal section has arrived, and wait patiently for the remainder of the musicians, who are very seldom on time. Mélane suggests that the group should begin its last-minute rehearsal despite their absence, and each member takes her or his place. As the day's psalm is run through, Martin calmly makes his way to the front of the church. Bass in one hand and Tim Horton's coffee in the other, Martin's arrival is applauded by the remainder of the group. Last to arrive is Nathaël. Also carrying a coffee, he looks as though he needs it. After all, he has not slept in more than twenty-four hours. Barely in time to catch the last fragment of the regular rehearsal, he is excitedly greeted by the group, who taunt him for bringing a coffee from Irving, not Tim Horton's.

When three or four groups of parishioners have made their way in the sanctuary, Mélane suggests that it is time to retire to the back room. The rehearsal continues there, unplugged. Jacques, Amélie, and Mélane, the lead singers, discuss timing and length of songs, and make final decisions regarding harmonies. Martin and I, having missed the last week's practice, make a last-ditch effort to learn the chord patterns, musical structure and style of the new additions to the repertoire in the last ten minutes before being ushered back to the front of the church to perform. As we file back to our respective places, we look inquisitively at which parishioners are present, and nod jovially to their friends and family. Waiting for the signal, Alvin whispers last-minute details to Catherine. A nod from the president and the band begins the Processional.

INTRODUCTION

Aims of Thesis and a Contextualization of the Existing Scholarship

The last decades brought to the fore a number of excellent studies on the performance and music-making of groups in the context of an encounter with the sacred. However, in the history of North American religious ethnography, certain belief systems and worship styles have been privileged over others. Folklorist William Wilson notes that in the study of religious folklore much of the work undertaken in recent years has concentrated on “small-scale, fundamentalist, largely southern, independent Protestants” (Wilson 1995: 20). Aesthetic judgment and a penchant for the “other,” the natural proclivity for the strange, the mysterious and the non-standard (to avoid the loaded word *deviant*) have skewed attention away from the more “traditional,” “normal,” and “orthodox” belief systems to the benefit of the more enigmatic.

Largely for this reason, but also because of the seemingly conservative and theological nature of mainstream religious expression and the closeness of African-American and white evangelical musical styles to contemporary popular music (which has placed greater emphasis on those traditions), the large majority of studies of music, belief and religious practice in the discipline of folklore have been conducted in the context of minority groups, often Christian fundamentalist, and frequently esoteric. William Wilson warns that from this largely Christian fundamentalist research “there has developed a sort of normative, stylistic folk religious pattern against which religious expressions of other peoples are sometimes judged to test their authenticity.” He explains

why this can be problematic: “that is, what is seen as memorable among these small-scale groups becomes the measure of what is memorable elsewhere” (Wilson 1995: 20).

I posit that the penchant for the study of such groups and the non-inclusion of other, more typical belief systems is also problematic because of the way it has much influenced our approach to the study of belief; the importance of basing theory and method on “criteria of religious validity established by the inner experience and perception of the believer” (Primiano 1995: 40) has doubtlessly been influenced by the processes and philosophies of these systems of thought, which are constructed with and through these criteria, where the religious authority and validity of an experience, belief, or action is understood to be established primarily through personal experience (see Allen 1991; Goldstein 1983, 1995; Hinson Lawless 1983; Titon 1988). To avoid this difficulty, Wilson calls folklorists to “acknowledge the importance of all religious experiences, even warm fuzzy ones, and to recognize their generative force in the creation of authentic religious folklore” (Wilson 1995: 20).

In the preparation, composition and organization of this thesis, I have relied on the example of a number of folklorists’ and ethnomusicologists’ works. These include Victor Turner’s *The Drums of Affliction*, Jeff Todd Titon’s study of an Appalachian Southern Baptist church (*A Powerhouse for God*, 1988), Glen Hinson’s *Fire in My Bones* (a study of transcendence and the Holy Spirit in African American gospel [2000]), Ray Allen’s examination of African-American sacred quartets in New York City (*Singing in the Spirit*, 1991), Thérèse Smith’s “‘Let the Church Sing!’: Music and Worship in a Black Mississippi Community (2004), and Katherine Hagedorn’s *Divine Utterances: The*

Performance of Afro-Cuban Santeria (2001). As is the case with the scholarship concerning Protestant denominations and other faiths, studies on the more orthodox belief systems in North America have tended to focus on the charismatic and less orthodox aspects of religious faith and practice. Even studies of Roman Catholicism have tended to focus on “special” cases – often Black gospel, Southern Evangelical, and Holy-Spirit-filled Charismatic congregations. Mary McGann’s *A Precious Fountain* (2004), is one of dozens of works on African-American Roman Catholicism.

Although Roman Catholic scholars since the Second Vatican Council have paid much attention to the liturgical canon, and perhaps even more attention to the lacks in post-Conciliar liturgies, very little research has focussed on members of the various groups that have been formed to assist in celebrating the liturgy, and even less scholarship has focussed on the effects of these individuals’ participation in these groups. Furthermore, very little scholarship has investigated the participation of youth in the Catholic Church, or how youths create ‘youth space’ and conceptualize *belonging* in the Church. As is the case with non-Roman Catholic religious involvement, Catholic youth discover their place in the Church through peer-related activities, including movie nights, church-based courses, theatre, choir, dance troupes, musical ensembles, camps, and dinners. Shaïda is an important new context for youth involvement in church activities in the region. Dynamic in its membership, the band has consistently involved large numbers of parish youth (for any given performance, the group typically counts fifteen to twenty participants). Created by youths aspiring to “liven up” the Mass by singing and playing

instruments (everything from violins to electric guitars and drum kits), Shaïda attracts parishioners from all over the province of New Brunswick.

This thesis is a liturgical ethnography of La Sainte Famille Parish Unity's youth musical ensemble, Shaïda. Exploring youths' response to (youth-created, youth-centered) opportunities for involvement, the significance of 'youth space,' and how participation fosters a sense of belonging and community, this study is at once an overview of the group's history and impact on its members and the Church, and a exploration of the group's music, style, performance, and genre. I analyze the role of Shaïda as a religious musical group in the participation of youths in the local Roman Catholic tradition, and the relationships between popular belief and identity in the creation of music in the context of the Roman Catholic liturgy. Contextualizing this study in the music-making of the Mass is significant, as music plays a decisive role in the social production of the liturgy; it generates a sense of identity and belonging (Cohen 2002), and articulates both individual and collective identities, strengthening people's relationship with each other and with God. Further, it serves to frame the Mass, setting it apart from other activities, thus heightening its symbolic significance.

An Introduction to Belief and Folklore

David Hufford contends that supernatural belief is the least studied of all topics in the discipline of folklore (1983: 21). In the same vein, Leonard Primiano notes his astonishment at Burt Feintuch's omission of the word 'belief' in his 1995 paper,

“Common Ground: Keywords for the Study of Expressive Culture” (2001: 44).¹ The lack of attention to the study of belief is all the more surprising when one considers that the concept of belief “is so central to the discipline that it is hard to talk about folklore without talking about belief” (Motz 1998: 340), and that esteemed folklorists such as Hufford and Primiano have been pointing out this shortfall for more than twenty years.

When folklorists do consider belief in their work, there is often a tendency to focus on “form rather than function, art rather than meaning, and structure rather than the beliefs which inform those structures” (Goldstein 1995: 24).² This “ethnographic secularization” (*ibid*) is not limited to issues of belief or religious materials, and is not solely a result of a scholarly discomfort with the concept of belief. Rather, the tendency is generalized throughout the discipline of folklore; this practice of first considering form, although unsupportive of the study of belief, is entrenched by a number of folklore’s foremost proponents, including Alan Dundes, who writes that “form, in fact, is, and in theory should be the decisive criterion for defining folklore” (1980: 21). This is not necessarily negative – a focus on form can be enlightening – but form must be understood as only one of a number of possible foci.³ Rustom Bharucha, writing on performance, takes note of the unspoken assumption that it is the ‘folk’ who perform for the ‘people,’ and not the other way around. He writes: “We don’t speak of the ‘folk’ watching a ‘people’s performance,’ it is ‘people’ who watch a ‘folk’ performance.” The unavoidable

¹ When Feintuch edited his book *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture*, in 2003, he yet again failed to redress his omission of the word ‘belief’ as one of the key words of the discipline.

² While Goldstein is specifically referring to the performance of religious genres that are considered artistic, her comments are also generally applicable.

³ Aside from a focus on folklore as a kind of art, Dan Ben-Amos identifies two more: folklore as a body of knowledge, and folklore as a mode of thought (Ben-Amos 1971: 5)

consequence is that 'people' come to be viewed in a more corporal light, as flesh-and-blood figures who constitute the 'mass,' while the 'folk' are "inextricably linked to forms" (1996: 80). With this in mind, Goldstein calls folklorists working in the area of belief to focus "on the belief and not, at least initially, on the phenomenon itself" (1989: 65).

It is challenging to pinpoint the exact reasons for the lack of attention to the concept of belief in the field of folklore. The problem may be partially due to belief being "an impossibly unwieldy construction" (Mullen 2000: 120) because of its broad purview, which includes as disparate issues as ideological, cosmological, secular, and sacred beliefs. Patrick Mullen comments that "[e]ven when we narrow it to beliefs about the supernatural, the spiritual, and the magical..., belief as a genre still overlaps many other categories: superstition, custom, ritual, legend, omen, folk religion and faith healing, to name a few" (2000: 120).

Another important reason for which belief is often overlooked by folklorists is the supposed responsibility of folklorists to be scientifically-minded (and, by extension, skeptical) in their examinations of systems of thought and issues of belief. Issued from the felt need of establishing folklore as a discipline worthy of academic recognition and respect, this prerequisite of being skeptical generally results in the researchers' believed duty to point out and criticize "false" beliefs, often to the detriment of their informants and their informants' cause. The supposed antagonism between belief and objective inquiry is, as Marilyn Motz highlights, due to the development of the discipline as an outgrowth of the Enlightenment. She explains that when "logical argument and

experimental proof replaced tradition as convincing evidence of truth and reality,” the modes of thought and behavior that previously had been taken for granted were inevitably discredited (1998: 341).

If to be modern and progressive one needs to establish connections with academic science (Hufford 1983: 22), the objective investigation of belief is impossible, as our society codes the term itself as exoteric and likens it to concepts such as superstition, making it “[call] into question its own validity” (Motz 1998: 340). In this vein, Jacques Derrida, writes that

there has never been a scholar who, as such, does not believe in the sharp distinction between the real and the unreal, the actual and the inactual, the living and the nonliving, being and non-being (to be or not to be, in the conventional reading), in the opposition between what is present and what is not, for example in the form of objectivity (1994: 11; in Motz 1998: 339).

Hufford deplores that most studies of spiritual belief count disbelief as the ‘objective’ stance, underlining that this tendency “is a serious systematic bias” in the academy (1995: 61). Referring to the existing prejudice as the scholarly “tradition of disbelief,” Hufford isolates what he believes are its four main causes: unconscious pressures from repressed needs and the operation of primary process impacting on traditions through projection, social needs leading to the development of social controls, creative urges that lead to hoaxes and the fabrication / modification of legends, and folk etymology and etiology (1982: 49). These disbeliefs are ‘confirmed’ by the common assertion that there is “no real cause-effect relationship between a believed supernatural strategy (e.g. prayer) and a subsequent change in state. The attribution of causality is said to have been based on the fallacious argument *post hoc ergo prompter hoc*” (Hufford 1982: 52).

Marxist thought has helped identify another significant reason why belief is largely ignored in the discipline of folklore. Writing specifically on youths' ways of knowing, Neil Campbell argues that the discounting of certain philosophies and manners of thinking to the benefit of others' (normally the hierarchy's, and in this case, academic science [among others]) is customary, but a grave oversight. Through the discrediting of naïve knowledges such as youths' ways of knowing, Campbell explains that "a whole set of knowledges [are] disqualified as inadequate to [their] task or insufficiently elaborated" because they are located low down in the hierarchy, or because they lack the required level of cognition or scientificity (2004: 12). Michel de Certeau, in the same period as David Hufford, signalled that the devalued forms of practice and knowledge should not be overlooked. Instead of attempting to situate the worth of these devalued knowledges in the habitual scale of scientificity, de Certeau writes that these are far more valuable and convincing than scientific "proofs," as, rather than existing on the margins of society, they actually form 'a maritime immensity on which socioeconomic and political structures appear as ephemeral islands' (1983: 41; in Motz 1998: 342).

Perhaps the most easily demonstrated difficulty posed by academic disbelief is its problematic misuse of the scientific method. The (wishfully obvious) logical error "that is the peculiar property of disbelievers; i.e. the *a priori* exclusion of one whole class of hypotheses – the supernatural ones" (Hufford 1982: 53) makes the position of academic disbelief untenable. For this reason, a "recognition that our disbelief may be open to logical flaws" (Goldstein 1989: 66) has been called for, along with the recognition that "the pejorative connotations of the term *subjective* (imaginary, illusory, unverifiable)

arise from an old-fashioned objectivism that merely denies the egocentric predicament” (Hufford 1995: 58). As Hufford states rather bluntly, “It is simply not possible today to assemble an intellectually defensible argument to the effect that supernatural belief is only possible for those lacking judgment, sound critical faculties, observational competence, and a scientific education. (Although many continue to try)” (1982: 54-5). If science is to respect its own method, it must open the door to at least the possibility of the supernatural.

The inclination to scepticism, agnosticism and plain disbelief in the discipline of folklore, although not completely defeated, has in the past twenty years, come under attack and lost much of its credibility. Goldstein notes that in the contemporary academy, most ethnographers now “recognize that from an ethnographic standpoint it is our responsibility to discover the meaning of religious beliefs for those who hold them without judgment as to truth value” (1995: 25). Reclaiming the concept of belief has been difficult for folklorists in the academy, Hufford notes, as the academic world has long “managed to get away with this assertion that a negative bias is necessary for objectivity in the study of belief, and that scholarly agnosticism or scepticism in its best sense are subversive tendencies” (1983: 25). Leonard Primiano writes that “thinking critically does not imply losing respect for a belief system or acting in a disrespectful way to its believers” (2001: 40). Goldstein clarifies that academics “need not be neutral about agents but... must be neutral about processes if [they] are to understand why people believe what they believe” (1989: 66). In other words, in the study of belief, we “must

distinguish between questions about the reasonableness and empirical bases of belief on the one hand and the objective truth of that belief on the other” (Hufford 1982: 54).

When the “various naturalistic / psychological / social / cultural explanations we find to account for our informants’ beliefs” are “courteously and sympathetically expressed” (Simpson 1988: 16), a much better understanding of their reasons for coming into being and enduring can be anticipated. An uncompromising open-mindedness in this area broadens our approach and can lead us to a deeper, less judgmental understanding of believers’ perspective and life experience (*ibid*). In order to sidestep the problems posed by academic disbelief, a “radical objectivity” (Hufford 1982: 48) will be in order throughout this thesis. However, as Goldstein makes clear, objectivity should not be a wholesale endorsement of everything and anything informants may believe, but should rather be limited to “a recognition that belief can be logical and well-reasoned despite the truth of its claim” (1989: 66). Motz advances that as folklorists, we should “reclaim, recuperate, and re-contextualize the concept of belief as a keyword of the discipline” (1998: 340), pointing out that the study of the practice of belief can shed light on “the intersection of knowledge, aesthetics, emotion and ethics” (*ibid*: 252). She explains that, among other things, “[a]ttention to actual instances of practices of belief allows us to consider the complex relationships among people, and the power differentials they represent, as well as the linkage between individual experience and cultural models” (*ibid*: 352).

Folk / Vernacular Religion

Religion, as Wade Clark Roof understands it, “consists of formal belief systems, rituals, and practices, yet is embedded in popular modes of thinking and acting” (2002: ix). Religion “pulls us into worlds that stretch far beyond everyday life, but is meaningful only when situated in the mundane world” (*ibid*: ix). While Thérèse Smith defines religion’s purpose as serving “to situate the self, the world, and the relations between them,” and operating to incorporate life’s ambiguity and moving towards a resolution of that ambiguity” (2004: 6), David Chidester writes that religion “enable[s] people to experiment with what it means to be human. Religious ways of being human engage the transcendent - that which rises above and beyond the ordinary. They engage the sacred - that which is set apart from the ordinary. And they engage in the ultimate - that which defines the final, unavoidable limit of all our ordinary concerns” (2004: 1). However we choose to define it, though, religion is a socially contextualized human product that “must be continuously produced and reproduced by people” (Berger 1967: 6; in Dillon 1999: 25). Because religion “derives its objective and subjective reality from human beings” (*ibid*), “religious meanings and the structure of religious authority are contingent on the social context in which they take form” (Dillon 1999: 25) Primiano highlights that the disciplines of religious studies and folklore can contribute to each other by materializing religious studies and de-materializing folklore. Religious studies, in its search “for the unquantifiable, the ultimate, the other, that which so exceeds our understanding that it is beyond material expression” is deprived of the material vehicles of expression offered by

folklore “which illuminate both the individual and communal search for meaning” (Primiano 2001: 56).

A popular way to think about the *practice* of religion (as opposed to its institution and their various theologies) has been to highlight the discrepancies between the “official” and the “folk.” Don Yoder, for instance, understood folk religion as being “the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion” (1990: 80). This vision is echoed by Roof, who writes: “Religion consists of formal beliefs, rituals, and practices, yet is embedded in popular modes of thinking and acting” (2002: ix). What is lacking in these definitions is of course the recognition that the emotional and experiential factors of religious life work in synergy with what is most simply referred to as “official religion” (Yoder 1974) to create *vernacular* systems of belief and of religion (as distinguished from “folk” – see Primiano 1995). These vernacular systems, according to Yoder (1974) and Primiano (1995), should be considered as fairly as the various institutions’ “official” systems. If vernacular religion is to be understood as “religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret and practice it” (Primiano 1995: 44), the exceedingly subjective character of belief needs to be considered. As different points of view and perspectives are an “inevitable part of knowing” (Hufford 1995: 58), unanimity is wholly unattainable. In fact, as Primiano explicates, “it is impossible for the religion of an individual not to be vernacular” (1995: 44). He demonstrates this by noting that even the heads of the largest religious institutions understand the world in terms of their own vernacular understandings of it (1995: 46).

In this study of Shaïda's members' participation in a theologically and institutionally-based (as opposed to subjectively and experientially-based) tradition (Goffman 1959) in a mainstream context, my aim is to strike a balance between theory based on individual experience and perception, and theory based on believers' understanding of the institutional Church as herself a pilgrim (the encyclical *Lumen gentium*). Recognizing the value of an inductive process which "balances the scholar's own knowledge and perspective with the scholar's empathetic understanding of the individuals being studied" (Primiano 1995: 40), I have opted, following Primiano, to emphasize both the believer's "official" beliefs and their "official religion" disseminated by the agency of the institutional hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church (47). For this reason, this field study looks in depth at multiple aspects of participants' beliefs, and more specifically, those beliefs which motivate, guide, account for, and shape youths' action within the context of the Roman liturgy.

This thesis examines the beliefs of representative members of a small group in the context of their performance in the Roman Catholic Mass. Because folklore's chief contribution to the study of religion is "attention to the emic parameters of religion in people's everyday lives, in their oral and material culture, and in their vernacular systems of belief" (Primiano 2001: 45-6), I seek to detail the religious practice and beliefs of the group. Throughout the interviews, group discussions, and participant observation conducted with the members of the band, I made an effort to occasion discussions bearing on members' religiosity and devotional practice, but was careful to avoid dictating the specific topic being discussed, so as to come as close as possible to what is in fact most

important to the members of the group, what they think is interesting about themselves and their religious practice, what is special, distinct, and different, along with what they consider matter-of-factly and as a natural certainty. In this way, I hoped to come as close as possible to what they consider the principal aspects of their faith to be, and thus avoided many of the pitfalls of a guided, formal interview.

Approach

The approach I use in this thesis derives from a number of disciplines and schools of thought. Centered on perspectives from folklore, it also embraces methods and insights from ethnomusicology, communications, oral history, religious studies, and ethnology. Since folklorists write about “the traditions and expressions of particular individuals and groups, not about folklore per se” (Oring 1994: 242), this examination of the members of Shaïda endeavours to examine the “everyday, unofficial, expressive communication” (Sims 2005: 3) of the group’s culture, and to consider the “knowledge[s], understandings, values, attitudes, assumptions, feelings, and beliefs transmitted in traditional forms by word of mouth or by customary examples” (Brundvan 1976: 4) of Shaïda to determine how members “communicate creatively with each other, as well as what – and to whom – they communicate” (Sims 2005: 3). In order to do so, I approach the study of the group as both a performance ethnographer and a regional ethnologist.

I borrow from Roger Abrahams the concept of performance as a collection of cultural enactments in which members of a group express and reinforce community

identity (Abrahams 1972), and as a performance ethnographer, my objective is the “thick description” (Geertz 1973) of the group in the context of their participation in the Mass. Treating the work of interpretation with the lens of a regional ethnologist whose aim is the study, interpretation and identification of the band as “regional culture” which “results from the integration or interaction of all its parts, of whatever nature they may be” (Fenton 1973: 13), I endeavour to bring the reader beyond depictions of the conventional structures and behavioural patterns, to interpretation. Geertz explains that during certain highly marked performances (in this case, music-making in the context of the Roman Catholic Mass), performers communally confer patterned expression to their inner experiences, displaying and thus revealing their ideals and thoughts, their fears and hopes, their overall worldview (Geertz 1973).

In each phase of this thesis project, I have been acutely aware of the difficulties, pitfalls and important advantages that my special position as both a member of the group and a scholar whose purpose is to conduct research entails. On the one hand, my involvement with the group has allowed me to access candid, sometimes very personal, information about its members. On the other hand, issues about what is “private” versus what is considered “off limits,” issues of objectivity, and issues of representativity have been constant reminders of the responsibilities I hold to the academic community, the Church, the community, and, most significantly, the members of the group. If “[t]he perceived validity of folkloric or ethnographic interpretation is determined not by raw data so much as the verisimilitude and efficacy of the interpretive object” (Jackson 1988: 276), the task of the ethnographer is a precarious balancing of interests. While William

Wilson notes that as folklorists, “we shape our data not to reveal the essence of the material we have collected, but to please and to meet the expectations of those who will read our publications or view our presentations” (Wilson 1995: 14), Diane Goldstein states that “as ethnographers, [we] impose our own worldview on our materials we collect and present in publication” (Goldstein 1995: 23). After all, as Bruce Jackson observes, “[w]hat we have to offer comes into existence in the editing, not in the happening” (Jackson 1988: 277).

If, as Jackson notes,

the collection of this fact rather than that fact is [already] an act of interpretation, as is the decision of what among the things documented are to be presented to others, and what order is to be selected for what presentation, and what stress and what enhancement and what stripping down occur (Jackson 1988: 285),

this “act of interpretation” must be very carefully balanced with an attitude of what is now called reflexivity. “If we obtain the appearance of objectivity by leaving ourselves out of our accounts,” David Hufford notes, “we simply leave the subjective realities of our work uncontrolled (Hufford 1995b: 58). Hufford warns against folklorists becoming ventriloquists by making facts speak for themselves. He maintains that “the inclusion of the actor (scholar, author, observer) in the account of the act and/or its outcomes” is a requirement for scholarly work (Hufford 1995a: 2) because it “helps to control hidden bias” (Hufford 1995b: 58). Throughout this thesis, my goal is what Diane Goldstein defined as a “self-conscious reflection on [my] assumptions and the personal effect of those assumptions on the materials collected and presented” (Goldstein 1995: 23).

Reflexivity, as important as it is in all academic disciplines, is critical in matters of faith and belief. Moreover, if “[l]iving as an individual in contemporary society has become a ‘reflexive project,’ a conscious process of making choices about how we define ourselves and act in the world” (Giddens 1991: 5), reflexivity in our scholarship is fundamental. Patrick Mullen explains that reflexivity “can be a way of avoiding both pathologizing and romanticizing belief studies by recognizing how our own beliefs and attitudes influence our representations of others’ beliefs” (2000: 131) and offers ways of escaping the restrictions of older paradigms in folk belief studies (119). Hufford notes that because “spiritual beliefs are strongly felt and can have socially important consequences... impartiality in spiritual matters [is] an impossibility” (Hufford 1995b: 61).

A reflexive examination of a group cannot be done without taking into account this particular group’s aesthetics and ideas about communicative competence (c.f. Goldstein 1995). In his study of African-American sacred quartets in New York City (1991), Ray Allen explains that the aesthetics of groups being studied should be understood as distinct from Western notions of art and beauty as recognized by an elite group of observers and critics. He clarifies his idea by stating that in his work, “aesthetics, or better ethno-aesthetics, [are understood as being] the principles by which a community organizes and evaluates its own expressive behaviours” (143). Allen argues that through ethno-aesthetics, “the standards used by members of a given community in judging the quality of their own performance becomes the central concern” (*ibid*).

For the purpose of this thesis, I conducted an important number of interviews, in a multitude of different settings. Because I am very familiar with the great majority of my informants, having been a member of Shaïda myself since the group's inception and having been good friends with most of the older members since childhood, I judged that informal interviews in familiar, comfortable settings were the most effective way to collect information. I conducted video recorded interviews in my home in Cocagne, in various informants' homes all over the counties of Kent and Westmorland, in the churches where Shaïda rehearsed and performed, in cars traveling to and from these rehearsals, in bars, restaurants and coffee shops, and wherever else informants were comfortable sharing their knowledge and experience with me. Most of the interviews were of an approximate duration of one hour (one MiniDV tape), although some were much longer (up to four hours) or shorter (as short as five minutes). Some informants were interviewed on multiple occasions, while others were interviewed only once, depending on the length of their involvement in the band, the depth of their knowledge about the group, the level of their commitment to Shaïda, its mission, and its members, and their eagerness to discuss relatively intimate details about their beliefs, their motivations, and their lives.

When I intended to interview an informant more than once, the questions I asked at the first meeting were general "grand tour questions." Guiding informants as little as possible, I was left with much superfluous material on subject matter very little related to the members' involvement in the band. During these interviews, informants were generally very comfortable, and spoke quite freely. The initial few minutes of each

interview tended to be more stressful for informants, who nonetheless rapidly forgot about the camera. In order to fill in the blanks left by the grand tour interviews, I returned with a second series of questions. These interviews were much more specific than the first series of interviews. I invited the informants to discuss unreservedly the items I hoped to explore with them, and was specific about what I hoped to learn.

In addition to interviews, I also administered a questionnaire to the youths of Shaïda. Because a number of issues I wished to explore involved more intimate portions of their lives, I ensured the anonymity of the respondents by preparing the questionnaire in such a way that they could answer them incognito. Only after they had completed the questionnaire did I invite the youths to identify themselves if they chose to do so.

A third source of information for this study was participant observation, which I often video recorded, audio recorded and / or photographed. Participant observation is important in this inquiry for two reasons: firstly, it allowed me to contextualize the youths' speech and thus better understand the circumstances in which performance is carried out. Significantly, participant observation can serve to lessen the disjunction between what informants identify as "normal" and what happens in actuality. Hackett and Lutzenhiser observe that this disjunction between what is considered as norm and what is reality is due to three main causes:

first, the possibility that the 'normal account' of one's behaviour is designed not to describe it but to manage the interviewing situation; second, that 'deviations' from the hypothetically normal pattern are unknown even to the deviant – the Self being social enough that persons engage in what Goffman termed 'civil inattention' in the face of their own as well as others' stigmata; and third, equipped with a reading of it such that their deviations are explained by circumstances - those interpretations that insist, in effect, that while the *behaviour* is deviant, the *person* is not" (Hackett and Lutzenhiser 1985: 318)

The “direct and unmediated examination of *experience*” (Hackett and Lutzenhiser 1985: 321) is the best way to circumvent these pitfalls. Most of the interviews and the participant observation conducted were captured with a Sony DCR-HC65 MiniDV video camera equipped with an external unidirectional microphone. The camera was set to capture in Slow Play, in order to ensure the highest quality image and to simplify the transferring process to DVD format.

On three separate occasions prior to the field work process, I explained the details of my project to the band members, and received their permission to record (via video, audio, and / or photograph) the meetings, rehearsals and performances of the group. It was established that each time I was present among them I was to be considered to be recording. Because many of Shaïda’s members are (or have been) university students, most were familiar with the roles of a researcher and the goals of fieldwork. Most of the members, because of their experience in the public eye as performers, were quite comfortable with the presence of a researcher in their midst, and at ease with the presence of a camera. As a participant observer during the field process, the only immediately visible difference between the other members of the band and I was that I normally was the person carrying a camera. During the two years of field research, I collected over one hundred hours of footage. This included leaving the camera running during rehearsals and performances, professional recordings of some sessions, formal and informal interviews, as well as catching parts of conversations between members.

I believe that my involvement in the group was a great help in the collection as well as the contextualization of data. The project is indeed very close to home. It was my

mother's brainchild and my father's endeavour. Most of Shaïda's present musicians were part of my first rock band, and I have been friends with much of the group since childhood. Moreover, Shaïda's evangelical and supportive ministry interests me, and so does the type of music played in the context of the Mass. Following folklorist William Wilson, I judge that "what I may lose from lack of detachment is far outweighed by what I gain from being a knowledgeable insider" (Wilson 1995: 14). Detachment from the field of one's subject of inquiry was once considered essential to any anthropological research. However, the trust which naturally develops amongst insiders of a group is a substantial advantage, along with the knowledge, understanding, and familiarity of the group.

Diane Goldstein has asserted that "few scholars have looked to religious groups themselves for an understanding of performance competence in the group's own terms" (Goldstein 1995: 30-1). This is especially damaging when one considers that throughout the Roman Catholic Church's history (and doubtlessly throughout the history of most other belief systems and faiths),

there has been a twofold concern, on the part of authorities and practitioners alike, with ritual forms, and especially musical forms. The first part of the concern is expressed in terms such as dignity, beauty, appropriateness, good taste, quality, pure art. The second part, tied to the first, is more explicitly religious. It has to do with the holiness of the act, which has to be 'prayerful' and 'sacred.' The search for 'beautiful' and 'holy' liturgical forms is not so much a matter of aesthetic or ethical norms, which are always relative, as it is a matter of values and 'non-values' of a group in its celebrations – what the groups recognizes as compatible or incompatible with the liturgy (*Universal Liturgical Guidelines* 9.1-9.2).

With this thesis, I endeavour to understand Shaïda's approach to competence with the emic insight of a participant. As an insider researcher, I had the advantage of understanding very well the culture of the group. However, my position as an insider made the collaboration of my informants vital. This project is a work of collaborative

scholarship; a number of my informants read parts of chapters, entire chapters, or even the thesis in its entirety in order to ensure accuracy and to guarantee that the personal privacy of those involved was respected.

Notes on Translation and Citation

Folklorist Dennis Tedlock, in a book titled *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation*, explained that the act of moving a spoken utterance to a page is a major act of translation; not only transportation, but *translation* (Tedlock 1983). Folklorist Bruce Jackson further states that this “involves a profound act of modal transformation” (Jackson 1988: 287). Compounding this already difficult issue of transforming the spoken word into text, most of the fieldwork conducted was done in French (more specifically, Chiac, the dialect of Acadians from the Moncton region (see Chapter 1), and therefore had to be translated. Establishing a means of doing so was a thorny issue. Firstly, Chiac’s polite use of vague allusions in the stead of precise meaning makes the task of interpretation much more heavily reliant on context than on the words themselves. Secondly, the structure and many of the rules governing Chiac are closer to English than to French (for example, the [mis]appropriation of English concepts and words and the French conjugation of English verbs). Because of this, however, preserving the meaning of the message as close to intact as possible is much easier for Chiac than simply translating standard French into English.

The work of translation and the transference of meaning were made much easier by the fact that I am a native Chiac speaker, familiar with its use, codes and issues, and also by the fact that I knew each of my informants quite well. Whenever translating informants' speech, I tried firstly to respect sentence structure and choice of words while keeping in mind the meaning I understood they were trying to convey. This was mostly practicable. When informants discussed matters of faith, their choice of words was often misleading. Because I hope my translating to be as transparent as possible, I refrained from "correcting" their language in my translation, and kept the original message intact, and clarified the statement in the text or in a footnote. In rare instances when there was simply no very close equivalent in English for the word used by the youths, I elected to include a list of its possible meanings (when translating the phrase "Shaïda est acceuillant," for instance, I replace the word 'acceuillant' with 'cordially inviting and puts others at ease').

To keep this thesis legible and its reader comfortable, I have elected to use very short in-text references for the interviews, stock footage of Masses, concerts, rehearsals, gatherings and sessions. The convention employed is simple: the initials of the person quoted, followed by a dash and a letter describing the occasion (I for interview, M for Mass, and so on). When more than one such occasion has occurred, a number will follow the letter. For example, "AC-I2" would be: Amélie Collette-Interview 2 (the '2' designates the second interview in the list of interviews with Amélie Collette). When more than one member have the same initials, I use the second letter of their surname to

identify them; “JDo-M2” indicates that this is a quote from Jacques Doiron taken from the second recording of a Mass included in the list of field recordings cited.

Circumstance

I	Interview	G	Gathering
M	Mass	R	Rehearsal
C	Personal Conversation		

Informants

AC	Amélie Collette	AD	Adrien Després
AM	Alvin Melanson	BL	Brian Leger
CL	Catherine Leblanc	CM	Charles Maillet
DD	Donia Després	EL	Erika LeBlanc
JDo	Jacques Doiron	JDu	Joelle Dufresne
JGa	Jessica Gallant	JGo	Jérémie Goguen
JM	Jonathan Martin	JP	Justin Pambrun

LR Lina Richard

MD Mylène Després

MG Mireille Gallant

MS Martin Saulnier

NB Nadia Babineau

NM Nathaël Melanson

RH Rayna Hayes

SH Stéphane Hébert

CAST OF CHARACTERS



Sébastien Després

Singer, Bassist, Songwriter, Scholar,

Theological Advisor, Organizer



Alvin Melanson

Guitarist, Organizer, Manager



Adrien Després

Musical Director, Organizer, Accordionist,

Manager.



Donia Després

Organizer, Theological Advisor



Nathaël Melanson

Drummer, Percussionist



Brian Léger

Guitarist, Songwriter



Jesse Leger

Guitarist



Martin Saulnier

Bassist



Mylène Després

Sound Technician, Advisor



Denis Doiron

Sound Technician, Singer



Jonathan Martin

Guitarist



Dominique Dupuis

Violinist



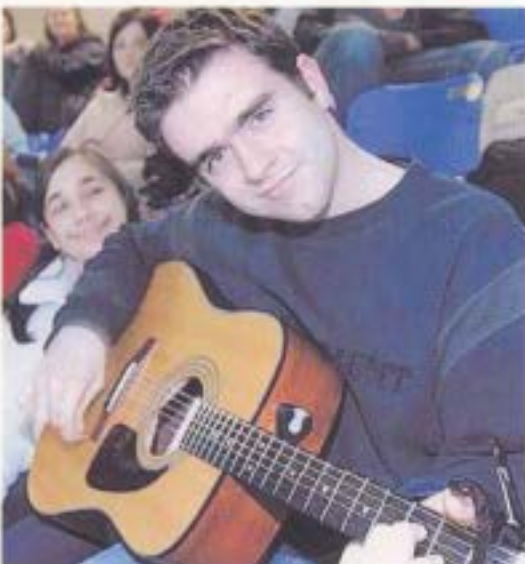
Catherine LeBlanc

12-string Guitarist



Mélanie (Mélane) Richard

Singer, Songwriter



Jacques Doiron

Singer, Songwriter



Mireille Gallant

Singer



Jacques Hébert (P'tit Jacques)

Singer



Stéphane Hébert

Singer



Lina Richard

Singer



Jérémie Goguen

Singer, Guitarist



Nadia Babineau

Singer



Joelle Dufresne

Singer



Charles Maillet

Singer



Amélie Collette

Singer

CHAPTER 1: A HISTORY OF THE CREATION OF SHAÏDA

Life In Cocagne

Cocagne is a community of 4000 souls on the south-east coast of New Brunswick, approximately forty kilometers north-east of Moncton. Once an English settlement, complete with an Anglican academy, the territory was gradually occupied by Acadian settlers. Those Acadians who successfully managed to hide during the Grand Dérangement (the deportation of the Acadians) in the 1750s eventually reclaimed most of their lands from the English. The population of Cocagne and the surrounding area is now mostly composed of Roman Catholics of largely Caucasian ancestry, descendants of the first French and Basque settlers in the area, but still counts among its numbers some of the original Anglican families (including the Dysart, Tuttle, and Hopper families).

Culturally as well as politically, the Acadians of the area consider themselves more closely akin to their English neighbors than their Francophone cousins from Québec. This is apparent in myriad ways. Cocagnais' choice of media language is immediately evident by a quick survey of their mailboxes; Moncton's *Times and Transcript* is delivered to five times as many residents as *L'Acadie Nouvelle*. The choice of radio programming is by and large English, and with the exception of the news, the great majority of the television programs viewed by Cocagnais are in English.

The political situation of Acadia may be partially at fault for the almost complete exclusion of French media. Acadians typically perceive their Québécois contemporaries

as arrogant loud-mouthed and ignorant, a prejudice which is exacerbated by the Belle Province's stance on federalism, language issues, language laws and identity – positions which are in direct conflict with Acadian interests. To mistake Cocagnais for a Québécois is a much more serious faux pas than confusing her or him with an Anglophone from the area or even from the United States.

Although most of the cultural products consumed by Acadians from Cocagne are from English sources and the music of the youths tends to be mostly American-made, the local music scene does count a number of popular artists whose repertoire is mainly French. Artists such as '1755,' 'Les Méchants Maquereaux,' Raymond Savoie, Donat Lacroix and 'Fayo,' whose albums are purchased by young and old alike enjoy a notable following, and account for a good percentage of the music typically listened to. Theatre plays an important part in the lives of many Cocagnais. Le Pays de la Sagouine, a theme park in Bouctouche, is the most important attraction in the area. Built as a mock historical village populated by characters from Antonine Maillet's novels, the actors plays their roles as if they were actually trapped in time. In addition to this, the *Théâtre de la Grand' Voile* in Shédiac and *Le Théâtre l'Escaouette* of Moncton present an impressive number of plays every year.

The language spoken by the inhabitants of the parish is called *le Chiac*. Following most of the grammatical rules imposed by the French language of the eighteenth century, the dialect incorporates English verbs, nouns, and expressions. Distinct to *le Chiac* is its French conjugation of English verbs, its frequent use of displaced nautical vocabulary, and its common pronunciation of the regular hard "c" sound [k] as the English "tch" [tʃ]

(i.e. “J’ai embarqué dans mon car pi j’ai drivé au tchai [quai].” [“I embarked in my car and I drove to the wharf.”])). Although nearly all the Francophone population of the area are fluent in English, very few Anglophones are able to function in French.

Life and the everyday in Cocagne is comparable to life in just about any small village in the province of New Brunswick. Most everyday food needs are met by the community’s two large convenience stores (Cocagne Variety, Eudore A. Melanson) and its Irving Convenience fueling station, while its restaurant/take-out (Le Pélican), sub shop (Roger’s Subs), fish markets, orchards (La fleur du pommier), liquor store, pub (Le Club du Village) and many bootleggers ensure relatively easy access to most of the typical victuals. Services in the community are plentiful, and the parish’s postal outlet, credit union (La Caisse Populaire Kent-Sud), gym, tire shop (Cocagne Tire), jeweler (Cléo’s), and its plethora of hair dressers (Les ciseaux d’or, Le salon Dawn, Monique), mechanics (Adrien Goguen & Fils, Guy Goguen), collision specialists (Omer & Romuald) and aestheticians guarantee access to most needs without requiring the half-hour trip to the city. A number of businesses in Cocagne, including Allain Sales and Service, Allain Equipment, Modul-RTS, The Cocagne Roofers, and a handful of bed & breakfasts employ a number of parishioners, and serve a much wider base than just the community.

Parish life is not only made more convenient by the presence of these services. Situated only forty kilometers from the city of Moncton, whose population base of 117,000 (www.gomoncton.ca) ensures a very wide range of services. The impact of being in close proximity to the city is difficult to underestimate. Firstly, most luxuries are immediately at hand: the cinema, the bars, the restaurants, theatres, coffee shops, and the

like. Secondly, the community benefits from the spending of thousands of Moncton-bound tourists who want to see the water and taste the lobster. Another important element is the possibility of employment in the city; because Moncton is among the wealthiest centers in Atlantic Canada, jobs abound (when compared to the remainder of the province).

Despite its small size, Cocagne has earned its place on the map. The first of the distinctions was its being the site of the first Roman Catholic marriage in Acadia.⁴ World-renowned lobster is still caught by Cocagne's handful of fishermen, and the lobster-fishing history of the community is still easily observed through the community's three wharfs, four fish markets and its three now-defunct lobster transformation plants. The third of the parish's many distinctions was its *Bazaar de Cocagne*. Considered a victory by those who organized it, the Bazaar was to be the first "Retrouvailles" of Francophones organized in Acadia post-1755. The gargantuan village picnic occasioned a number of other important factors which helped make the community of Cocagne known to the world at large, including Acadia's first beer garden (which was held in a large herring trap), the appearance of the Goguen Brothers Tug-of-War team in the European circuit and Sylvio Bourque's domination of the Canadian Arm Wrestling Championships.

As an adjunct to the Bazaar, the parishioners of Cocagne set up the village to be on the CBF/APBA North American Grand Prix hydroplane racing circuit in the early

⁴ The marriage of Joseph Guéguen to Marie Caissie was a significant event, as Guéguen later became one of the founding members of the parish. A number of songs have been popularized about him and his wife Marie, and most parishioners are quite able to give intimate details about their life.

1970s. The sportsmen immediately fell in love with the community, and Cocagne was added the very next year as one of the twenty circuits in North America. Cocagne was an unlikely place for such an event, as the 1,300-family parish was positioned alongside San Francisco, Valleyfield, Chicago, Miami, Detroit, Buffalo, and Minneapolis. Cocagne became known one of the fastest and best-loved courses in the North American Grand Prix circuit, as the bay's salt water was buoyant, the lack of wind in the river made for flat water, and the course's shape made for World-record-breaking course. Because of the regattas, which were abandoned twenty-six years after their initial trial in the parish (in 1998), the parish-run *Conseil Récréatif de Cocagne* now owns a legal-sized arena, a motel, a bowling alley, and a marina for pleasure boats.

Before the regattas allowed for the development of the arena / marina sporting complex, the parish youth were already very active. They mostly organized their own activities, the great majority of these being sports. Baseball was played on community-owned grounds, and hockey matches were held in the outdoor hockey rink built over the river. With the exception of a handful of inter-parish sports tournaments organized by the youths, the Church was the organization responsible for coordinating a good part of the inter-community rallies, and habitually did so through an organization called *La Jeunesse Rurale Catholique (JRC)*. The youth group, which met in the parish hall every week to sing, make music, play charades and fraternize, met with the other groups from the entire diocese monthly. Because *La Jeunesse Rurale Catholique* was significantly stronger in Cocagne than in St. Antoine, Bouctouche, Ste-Marie, and the other smaller communities of Dundas, inter-parish activities were always held in the parish. Related to the Jocisme of

the city centers, the movement “strove to embody the social Catholic vision in the milieu of the working class itself, and it sought to use Catholic proletarian youth as instruments of this goal” (Arnal 1997: 512). *L’Évangéline*, New Brunswick’s only regular French newspaper at the time, gave the group much favoured publicity (Arnal 1997: 522). The Second Vatican Council was partly to blame for the dissolution of *La Jeunesse Rurale Catholique* in the parish, as the expectation that “something else,” something less hierarchical and more representative, would come along to replace it. Some attempts to include the younger generation were made, but generally failed to yield fruit. In Cocagne, in spite of the optimism and anticipation generated by the Second Vatican Council, the only space which was created for youth during Mass was during the Christmas Mass, where those few with great voices could join the parish choir.

Although the *JRC* was dissolved more than three decades before the creation the group which would become the Shaïda Musical Ensemble, one of the presidents of the *JRC* in the parish of Cocagne, Adrien Despres, had been marked by how this had given him another vision of the church. The generation of parish youth born in the 1980s grew up with the traditional Canadian activities of hockey, soccer, karate, baseball and softball. Ice skating and bowling were also popular, albeit to a lesser extent. For those interested in military-type activities, the Air Cadets and the scouting movement were important activities until the mid-1990s, when Cocagne lost its scouting association. Reading activities through the local libraries were organized during the summers, and music lessons (including piano, guitar, and flute) were available through private tutors at reasonable prices. Although Cocagne did have a youth choir which sang occasionally at

Mass, its membership was so erratic that it only performed for the High Days of the Church calendar (see Chapter 5) some years. More consistent was the church-organized corporeal movements group, which performed at Mass at least thrice yearly.

The Académie Shaida

In September 1998, aspiring to be of service to her community, Donia Després registered in l'Université de Moncton's three-year program in pastoral formation. The course proved to be "[an] opportunity to analytically investigate her milieu, her personal resources, the stakes of the community in the Catholic Church of today" (Collette-Bourque 2001). The research project she chose to undertake was an exploration of the ways in which the youths were involved in the activities of their collectivity. Although she was quite aware that youth participation was rare in both community volunteering and in church participation, she was at a loss to explain why this was the case. She began to appreciate the need for an appraisal of the ways in which the youth of Cocagne could be assisted in better learning to form community. "It was from my orientation, observation and intervention practicum [at university] that I found the need of a meeting place for the youth," Donia explains, a place "where they could be accepted and express themselves, and to be loved and valued" (DD-I2).

Forming solid intergenerational bonds was crucial to the project for a number of reasons: firstly, because of the wariness adults typically felt towards the youths, it was impossible for them to obtain access to a space large enough for their activities without

the moral backing of at least a small group of influential supporters. Another important reason for making the group intergenerational is that the group's organizers understood the project's secondary function as community-building, a way of helping the diverse assortment of parishioners see themselves as "a community of people who live together with the same ideas, the same reasons to live" (*Committee meeting minutes*). "I think our goal was to re-ignite the collective conscience," Donia explains, "the community aspect of our village" (DD-I2). Donia reasoned that the creation of a sense of *Communitas* (Turner 1974) was necessarily associated with the possibilities for evangelization she sought to generate. She explains: "we just want to advance the Kingdom. Like many people, young and less young, we do something together for the good of everybody. That's a spiritual experience from the start" (DD-I2).

As Donia's desire to evangelize prompted her to take action, for Adrien, it was his eagerness to foster "the spirit of celebration in the village" (DD-I2). In the 1970s, Donia points out that it was Adrien who had first brought the hydroplane regatta project to the village, in order to assist its convergence (DD-I). Adrien perceived the group being formed as a perfect opportunity "to highlight our [Acadian] culture, our dances, our songs and our jokes. A place where we can have a good time and have fun with the kids. To form bonds between the young and the less young" (DD-I2).

"For us as volunteers," Donia explains, "the challenge was to find an original way to form a community where the youths developed a feeling of belonging and where they felt like incorporating themselves" (DD-I2). It was established early on that the general mistrust of adults vis-à-vis teenagers would be the chief impediment to the project. A

study of American teens at this time showed that although large percentages of teenagers described themselves as happy (92%), responsible (91%), self-reliant (86%), optimistic about their future (82%), trusting of other people (80%), and “very intelligent” (79%), they commonly report that most adults would describe them as lazy (84%), rude (91%), dishonest (65%), and violent (57%) (Barna 1998). The younger generation of Cocagne described the prejudice against youth in much the same way (see later in this chapter). Attuned to the needs of the youth, the group knew its work was cut out for them. “Weary of ideologies,” the notes describing the first official meeting read, “they [the youth of the parish] are sensible to the misery and the suffering of their peers.” Despite the fact that the discrimination is mainly perpetuated by the older generation, it was understood that if there was any progress to be done, the youths would have to be the ones to initiate it.

The first official meeting of the organizing committee was held at the local inn, where it was decided that the mission of the group of volunteers would be “to make ‘wakers of responsables’” (DD-I). Donia explains:

we were awakeners of responsibility. We wanted to make them responsible in the community and do something. We wanted to encourage involvement and personal reflection, and the speaking of one’s mind, to say what they were living (DD-I2).

In order to be in a position to do so, the youths and adults prepared two lists: the first cataloguing what the group was “To Be” and the second, a record of what the members wished “To Have.” In the creation of these two lists, the participants were guided by a desire to attract as many youths as possible. For this reason, the committee’s decision-making was predicated on the idea that youth need to feel useful, feel

productive, and have fun. From the lists drawn up at the first general meeting, it was obvious that the youth were particularly interested in theatre. “It had really come out,” shares Donia (DD-I2). She was delighted by the youths’ decision. “According to me,” she explains, “there is no evangelization that is possible without trust. Trust is earned through positive experiences. Theatre, certainly for most, is a positive experience” (DD-I2). Moreover, Donia already strongly believed that “the best way to involve youths is the recourse to art, such as song, dance, and theatre” (DD-I). Adrien, who had been involved in theatre in his college days, was pleased that the youths showed so much interest in it. He reasoned:

...there is nothing else which involves so many youths in so many things as a play... For a successful play, there needs to be- and then he names all the, you know -- the actors, the musicians, dancers, playwrights, sound technicians, lights, background, sketchers, painters, carpenters, costume makers, practices, organizers, guides (like us), production committees, fundraising committees, publicity committees, a place to practice, all that, money” (AD - *Committee meeting minutes*).

With theatre production as a main project, the organizers began inviting youths to the newly-created group’s weekly meetings.

Youths from the age of twelve to the age of twenty started meeting at the parish cultural centre every week. The older youths would organize activities for the younger kids. Games included charades, hide-and-seek, various ice-breakers, board games, card games, soccer, tag, chess, checkers, lawn darts, and pause-and-play theatre. Because they felt responsible for entertaining the younger members, the older members would regularly propose new ways to amuse them, which they took from books, prior experience, and the Internet. An important activity organized by and for the group was the hosting of the international group of performers called “Up With People.” University students from over

ten countries were brought to Cocagne to spend a week with the youths, and were hosted mostly in the homes of the members.

Vee was one of the leaders of this troupe of “Up With People” performers. A Belgian student in her twenties, she was present when the members of the Cocagne youth group were brainstorming to find a name for their organization. Preparing for their first open-house theatrical performance, the youths had concluded that the posters would be more effective if the troupe had a name. The Belgian suggested the name of her dance studio, ‘Shaïda.’ She explained that Shaïda meant “Fire of light and Joy” in Aramaic. Father Yvon Bastarache, a Cocagnais missionary in Cuba, upon hearing the name of the group, explained that he believed ‘Shaïda’ meant “Road of Happiness” in Hebrew. With the addition of the qualifying “Académie,” which was considered to be a “very professional-sounding” alternative to the word “école” (school), more accurate than “université” or “college,” and broader than the words “troupe” or “compagnie” (company), the name was immediately adopted, by unanimous vote.⁵

With time, the objectives of the group became even more precise. No longer part of a nameless group, members recognized the need to compose a corporate mission statement for the Académie Shaïda. After a series of conversations, outlines and drafts, a final draft was agreed upon by the committee of volunteers that oversaw its functioning:

L’Académie Shaïda is a youth center of activity promotion that favours the development of loving relationships and the respect of others. L’Académie, benefiting from the support of the community, encourages participation and creativity. It is a place where the youth develop

⁵ Although the meaning of the name has never been verified, the youths involved frequently quote the explanation given by Vee, the Belgian student.

themselves a leadership and their personal discipline by artistic and cultural learning, so as to assure a positive future full of confidence (*Shaïda committee minutes*).

Although there were no references Shaïda finally came to be understood by its organizers as “a meeting place, where the youths would feel welcomed, where there would be occasion to share, to evangelize themselves, to learn to accept themselves, to be proud of their faith, to seek together ways to take an active place in the activities of their milieu, including their church” (DD-I).

The most common manner in which youth participants signalled their desire to take an active place in their community during the first years of the Académie was doubtlessly the writing, preparation, direction and presentation of theatrical productions. These plays, entirely conceived by the members of the Académie, often dealt with the same themes; although the troop had no official link to the church, the great majority of their productions either dealt directly with issues of religion or contained very specific references to the Roman Mass and its local form. Jokes about the parish priest, the rules of conduct during the Mass, the gossip of old women before and after the Mass, as well as the Post-Mass trip to Le Pelican, a local restaurant following Mass came to be the favourite skits of the youth. The power inherent in playing the priest amused the players, and the possibilities for comical reversals when presenting “sacred” elements in the secular space of the stage made the material easily accessible and funny.

In an attempt to draw a larger number of youths to the group, a “Friday the Thirteenth Party” was coordinated by Shaïda’s organizers. The celebration was held on

the night of the 6th of August 1999, around a bonfire. The following advertisement was run on the local radio stations:

The new Académie Shaïda is organizing a campfire for all the youth of, and young tourists residing in, Cocagne, and who want to celebrate Friday the 13th. Shivers guaranteed, with legends to scare you by Sylvio Allain. Next to the Cocagne cemetery, from 21:00. (DD-12)

The famous puppeteer Jean Péronnet was invited to open the evening with his Pépère Goguen skit, followed by Sylvio Allain, a professional playwright and renowned raconteur. The evening was a success, and resulted in a number of newcomers to the group. Among the number of other activities that were organized to act as supplements to the regular schedule, dances and sleep-overs were the most common and by far the most popular among the youths. Coordinated by the youths, they created opportunities for members to get to know each other better and functioned as occasions to recruit new members.

Theatre proved to be a very successful way to assemble youths. The group grew to over fifty participants by its third year. Its success was mostly attributed to the youths' control of their activities and the overall operation of the group. True to its mission, Shaïda members endeavoured to encourage and support their peers by organizing gala soirées. These galas were arranged as ways to recognize the members who distinguished themselves by their various talents. The prizes won were mostly symbolic, but the medals and awards were professionally made by a local trophy maker. Categories ranged from "Best Actor" to "Best Joke Told" (the joke was inscribed on the plaque), and from "Most Devoted Member" to "Prop-Maker of the Year." The youths were very careful about not

excluding anyone, and typically reserved the most eminent awards for the most withdrawn people, those considered to be most in need of recognition.

The Académie Threatened and the Youths' Reaction

The survival of the enthusiastic Académie was threatened when the youths were informed that a lobby was in the works to convert the community centre into a funerary cooperative, which meant that they were going to lose their meeting place. Very bitter about how things evolved, Adrien shares:

This all started with a [funerary cooperative]. They wanted to make a funeral home in the parish hall, but then we fought against this so that it wouldn't be done, because we thought it was a site for the youths. When they saw this, they said: 'No, the parish hall isn't fit anyhow, so we have to destroy it [and build anew].' So then we lost the parish hall. We could no longer do theatre, we didn't have the space (AD [MD-I]).

It was feared that the loss of the building would be a death blow to the organization, for a number of reasons. Firstly, as Adrien suggested, it was the only venue in the community which was large enough to accommodate the quantity of people in the group. Secondly, the youths had worked very hard to make the space their own, through fixing up the old building, constructing a stage, a lighting system, curtains and a costume gallery, and making a gigantic mosaic on the floor with paints donated by the community. Because of the invested time and effort, the loss of the space was disheartening. A third reason why it was feared that the Académie would not survive was that this move by the parish substantiated the youths' feelings about the community's bias against them. The future of l'Académie Shaïda was uncertain.

When the youths were informed that they were going to lose their meeting place, the community centre, because of another group's plan to start of funerary cooperative, they started discussing ways to acknowledge the sacrifices made by the parishioners in order to support and fund their activities. In order to thank the parish, they began to consider the possibility of organizing a new play for the public. Small discussion groups were formed which were to thrash out ideas for a possible project for the Académie. Most groups desired to organise a play, though one of these groups disagreed. Reluctant to share their ideas with the leaders, they admitted that they felt that the Mass was "very boring." The Académie went on to organize its new play, which was considered by the youths to be a tremendous success.

Donia, who had already dreamt of helping youths organize a special Mass, was enthralled with the idea of coordinating this project. Once the play had been presented, the Académie was thirsty for a new project. Discussions about making this happen went on, and it was decided that something should be done about the Mass. Mylène reports the conversation she had with Maxime which started it all: "I was talking to him about that one time. We both found the Mass boring. [...] It wasn't a revelation. It was just pointing out the obvious. So yeah. We went to see mom and dad and we told them it was boring" (MD-I). When the pair presented the idea to the group's leaders, they immediately agreed to help. The suggestion was made that this Mass could be a regular occurrence, and that it might even be a means of saving the Académie. Mass, after all, was still theatre. The suggestion was welcome by most of the Académie's forty members, as they felt that the

Mass generally failed to meet the wants of their generation and needed to be refreshed anyhow.

Adrien and Donia's help was indispensable for the creation of the project, as most adults in the parish are often wary of youths' motivations. Mylène posits that the community⁶ tends to mistrust youths "[b]ecause of the way youth are seen in society now. There are not many youths who go to church" (MD-I). She continues: "We didn't have any support... You saw that the youths wanted to get involved in that. But the adults didn't believe the youths could actually do something" (MD-I). Adrien further explains:

With adolescents in churches, it doesn't always go as it should. We don't trust them. Adults always have the attitude to believe that if there's something that badly done in the parish, it's because of the adolescents. Adults don't trust adolescents (AD [MD-I]).

A case in point was the article in *Ainé/es en Marche*, the first published consideration of the group. The writer completely neglected the role of the founders, exclusively highlighting instead Donia's part in the formation of the group and assigning to her the entirety of the credit. The author writes that Donia:

was worried of the fact that the youth of her entourage seemed little interested by the Sunday Mass. Questioned on the subject, they answered that they didn't think it was 'cool' and that church was boring. However, she dreamed to see the day when not only these youths would assist Mass but would accept to participate actively at such a celebration. She thought that one way to make this happen would be the organizing of a meeting place, where the youths would feel welcomed, where the occasion to share, to evangelize themselves, to learn to accept themselves, to be proud of their faith, to seek together ways to take an active place in the activities of their milieu, including their Church (Collette-Bourque 2001).

⁶ From this point on in the text, the word 'community' is used to refer to the Sainte Famille Parish Unity which is formed by the parishes of Cocagne, Notre-Dame and Saint-Antoine. When referring to the group itself, I borrow from Ray Allen's definition, who defines 'community' as "broad human networks bound together by common social relationships, interactions, values, experiences, interests, and sense of identity. The term further implies the existence of a shared history, culture, and locality. Like many forms of human social organization, communities are dynamic, fluctuating entities, and any individual usually belongs, simultaneously, to several communities" (Allen 1991: 19).

Although Marie Collette-Bourque is correct in her assertions, her failure to recognize the role played by Maxime and Mylène is testament to the endemic viewpoint that youth are unaware of the need to bring about change, unwilling to support it, and unable to help make it happen. Adrien was instrumental in the realization of the project because of this reluctance of his generation to have confidence in younger age groups.

His confidence in the young people aside, Adrien's motivation to join in the youths' self-created mission was unclear to them at the beginning. The motivation to make a Mass for the youths and attract more teenagers to the church was not Adrien's nor the other leaders' primary purpose. Those who were involved in the Académie or in producing the "Youth Mass" still sought to create a setting propitious to develop leadership and personal discipline among the youths through artistic and cultural learning, as acknowledged in the Mission Statement created at the time of the Académie's conception. The youths quickly came to realize that Adrien simply sought to help the youths find happiness. Amélie sums up Adrien's motivation to help in the creation of the youth Mass:

They realized it was boring, going to church, and he agreed- your father was *completely* in accordance with that. I think he saw how it would make the youths happier to have a Mass that was more upbeat. To bring youths to church. But I don't know if that was necessarily his objective... I think that when he saw Mélane and all them singing, and they liked that, and they wanted - it was like it was more their motivation, that they wanted that the youth come to church. Your father saw that this made them happy. He was like 'Alright. All for it.' And you know, you father as well, is a man of faith (AC-I)

Jacques interprets it otherwise:

He was in music when he was younger. Even if he doesn't play in the choir as such, he prays with us anyhow. He likes it when he tries to make us do something beautiful together. If it works, well he's happy, and if it doesn't work, well, it'll work next time. He's always supporting. And he likes that too, I tell myself, because he's part of the last generation. He

likes to see that the new generations continue going to church and continue to believe and to pray in Jesus. To hope to you or me or someone of the group, maybe, in our generation, when we'll be fifty or sixty, we'll do the same thing (JDo-I).

The narrative which details Maxime and Mylène's first efforts and of Adrien's joining their cause is often chronicled amongst the youths. Martin, who joined six years after the group's inception, relates how things came about:

Adrien had brought youths to Mass and he had said: 'So what did you think about it?' 'Well. It was boring.' And after that, he said: 'Yes, I agree with you, yes, it's boring. So what would you do?' Instead of saying 'No, it's not boring,' and all that, he said: 'OK. Well. Let's find a solution. How it could be *not* boring?' (MS-I)

With Adrien on board with them, the youths held a first meeting with the entire Académie, where they discussed the best manner in which to approach the parish and how to go about organizing a Mass. It was decided that Maxime and Mylène represent the group at the next parish liturgical committee meeting.

Mylène and Maxime, with the help of Adrien, organized the meeting. "We went to a meeting of the committee," Mylène explains, "and we told them the Mass was boring. And that we wanted to do something about it" (MD-I). The pair were met with skepticism. The priest in charge of the parish at that time, Father Alban, remembered the folk Masses from the early 1970s, and was very cynical about "this kind of thing."⁷

Mylène clarifies exactly what she, Maxime and the Académie needed to contend with:

At that time, it was Father Alban. He wasn't very excited about the whole thing. He thought it was- I don't know. He didn't like it much. Not that he didn't like youths in church, but he

⁷ Musically, Vatican II meant the introduction of a whole new repertoire for the Mass. Individuals began to write songs to be used, and the "folk Mass" was born. The new songs were in the style of the day, and along with the hope sparked by the Council, began a movement which swept over much of the Western World. Cusis notes that the Catholic folk Mass "paved the way for Jesus Rock as Vatican II proved to be the forerunner of the non-Catholic Jesus Revolution. (Cusis 1990: 131). The first folk Mass, "Mass for Young Americans," was produced by Ray Repp in 1964 (Thompson 2000: 29-30).

didn't like the youth to run things in church. But we did it anyways. [...] For him, the youths and making it a little more upbeat, making it more fun for us wasn't traditional, and wasn't blasphemy, but almost. He just didn't want it. He just wasn't down with it (MD-I).

Mylène remembers that Father Alban had explained that during the excitement of post-Vatican II, thousands of such groups had quickly sprung up, only to peter out once they had realized it was not viable. "He expected the same from us," she shares (MD-I). The youths of Cocagne would not be discouraged, however. I remember reasoning that most groups in the years immediately following Vatican II did not benefit from the help of lay people educated in ministry and theology, and willing to involve themselves fully in the liturgy. Aware of the difficulty of getting the priest onboard because of his reluctance to allow youths to make noise in the church, Maxime and Mylène judged that an aggressive approach would best serve them. "We just told him that we were going to do the Mass, and that it wasn't going to be that bad, whatever," Mylène explains. "We just told him we were going to do it, instead of asking him" (MD-I).

Because they wanted to attract more youths, the organizers insisted on creating a special "Youth Mass" which would be outside the liturgical calendar, focused on youth and youth issues, and, more importantly, have youths be in charge of the various non-ecclesiastical ministries, including everything from music-making to ushering, serving to greeting. Dalmais explains the nature of these various ministries:

Among the ministers who perform a service in the liturgical assembly, some are ministers of God's Word and are entrusted with the proclamation of the readings; others are ministers of the celebrant whom they assist and serve; others, finally, are more directly at the service of the people whom they lead or over whom they exercise a vigilance (Dalmais 1987: 104).

The idea of a Mass entirely ministered by youths was borrowed from a group of young people from Edmundston who organized special Masses in the mid-1990s. We had come

in contact quite a few years prior to the creation of Shaïda with a number of this group, who had been invited to organize a series of “Youth Masses” in Shédiac.⁸ This group prided itself in emulating as closely as possible the Sunday Obligation Mass as organized by their parish’s liturgical committee. Mylène shares how the organization of the “Youth Mass” developed in Cocagne:

I thought it was really important, to have the youths doing it. I miss that a little, to have the youths doing the readings and all that. We had called everyone from Cocagne. Because, you know, we started with Cocagne first. We had called everyone. Joel Richard always came to do the offertory, because I don’t know- It was cool, because his father always did the offertory, so he did the offertory. It was like a family legacy. There was even the Goguens, even if they weren’t from Cocagne, who came from the start: Ghislain, Christien, Jérémie. As soon as we knew it. Philippe, even, from the start. Who else? Isabelle and Stéphane got involved right, right away as well. They served Mass more than anything else. They always did that and were more than happy to do it. They became ministers of Communion after a while (MD-I).

To organize a special Mass “showed that we didn’t just want to play music. That we didn’t just want to make noise in church” (MD-I); it highlighted to the community that the group was earnest in its desire to serve the parish. Marie Collette-Bourque writes:

Involving young adults in the animation of the Mass permits them to put a personal touch in the music, but also in the greeting, reading, Communion, et caetera. This permits them to express their creativity, their leadership, and their faith in a manner which is appreciated by the other members of the community (Collette-Bourque 2001).

Although most of the community rather enjoyed the idea of having the youths play at Mass, this was clearly not unanimous. Many parishioners disagreed with the project, and manifested their disapproval in a number of ways, at times very vocally.

⁸ From June 7th to June 11th 2006, Shaïda was invited to play at a church-organized family gathering in Edmundston, in recognition of their years of service in Cocagne. The youth of Shaïda accepted with enthusiasm, in recognition of the inspiration of the city.

To create a Mass especially for the Académie was necessary in order to keep everyone happy. In order to avoid possible conflicts with other organizers and musical groups, Mylène explains that “We took a time where no one was singing, and it was just going to be him talking, and we started it” (MD-I). On January 6th 2000, on the occasion of the celebration of Jesus’ Baptism in the river Jordan, the youth organized their first Mass. Mylène shares the reaction of the cynical community:

In the beginning, it wasn’t the nice commentaries we get today. The old people thought it was too loud, and- Yeah, we had tweaking to do, that’s sure. But it was too loud, and it wasn’t cool, and it bothered. It took a long time before we got the support of the community (MD-I).

Although a special time was indeed set aside for the group to organize their Mass, more than a few older parishioners attended the Mass because the time suited them better. The group was ambivalent about their presence. On the one hand, the fact that they came to the “Youth Mass” signaled that these older parishioners recognized the Mass as valid (in the Eucharistic sense). On the other hand, however, the older parishioners’ reaction to the group was not overly positive. Mylène shares:

It wasn’t that it was cold, but it was awkward, the adult’s reactions in the beginning. For me, who’s always been in the back, I saw that they were there and they weren’t sure of what we could do. They didn’t trust us. You could tell they didn’t trust us because they didn’t give us the support. And they didn’t give us the opportunity (MD-I).

The community’s failure to support the youths was, I suspect, primarily due to the noise levels at these first Masses. The band was indeed very loud, because every instrument and voice had to be cranked up in order to compete with the rock drum kit that was played. Many complained, maintaining that such noise was not appropriate in the context of the Mass. Another reason why most of the community was skeptical of the youths was the familiarity of the youth in the church space, which scandalized the “older crowd.”

For many, the most shocking aspect of Shaïda was the band's use of electric instruments in the church. The situation at this time in Shaïda's history was, for some members, reminiscent of The Simpsons' Ned Flanders' cry: "Electric guitars in church? Oh my God! Some dropouts must have overpowered the Reverend!" The reluctance to accept the electric guitar as a suitable instrument for use in church was due in large part to the tarnishing of its image by a host of conservative Christians. For instance, Routley, in his detailed 1976 study of the music of the Roman Church, writes:

The guitar, so popular nowadays as an alternative, is a lamentable substitute for several reasons. In the first place, the guitar is by nature a gentle instrument, and the need to amplify it (or a group of guitars) to make it adequate as support for a congregation seriously distorts its nature. Another difficulty is that variety of tone is simply not available. Third, there is always a tendency for arrangers to produce exceedingly ugly harmonic progressions... which damage the apprehensions of listeners... The provision of any kind of decent contrapuntal bass, such as is written in any decent hymn tune, takes the music beyond the capacities of players who are accustomed to the quite different harmonic conventions of secular pop music. A fourth reason is the inevitable danger that guitarists will contemptuously dismiss the need to learn a proper accompaniment style (Routley 1978: 107).

C.S. Lewis once commented that church music was useful as a necessary discipline whose unpleasantness was probably good for the souls that endured it, but that if it were ever made in the spirit of offering God a gift, it would likely be positively harmful to all concerned (Lewis 1971: 94). "There are in any congregation not only a number of unmusical people but also a small number who positively dislike church music," writes Routley, in the same vein. He continues:

They are always a minority, but they do us a great service by being there. They call a necessary halt to starry-eyed notions that music is a great unifier, or that through music everybody is assisted in worship (Routley 1978, 131).

This is a lesson the members of Shaïda were to learn very early on. Further problematizing the issue was the fact that at this point in the band's evolution, the fact that their sound was akin to a pop rock band's. Chidester writes:

Rock [music] has often been the target of Christian crusades against the evils that allegedly threaten religion in American society. From this perspective, rock music appears to be the antithesis of religion, not merely an offensive art form, but a blasphemous, sacrilegious, and antireligious force in society (Chidester 2004, 44).

Though most of their repertoire was still issued from the parish choir's music books, the band's music was nonetheless criticized for being youth music.

Due to the community's initial skepticism, Father Alban was even more careful to constrain and keep in check the bearing of the group: "In the beginning, Father Alban didn't want to let us do anything. Anything," Mylène deplores (MD-I). Jérémie recalls how difficult it was for the group:

I remember the priest of a certain parish wouldn't let us sing. He was old, and he was with the tradition where it was only choirs. There was no question of letting youths make noise like that in his church" (JGo-I)

The problem occasioned by such a project is far from being uncommon. In her book on musicking, Mercédès Pavlicevic writes what often conspires:

Here we have a 'core' group of dedicated musicians who put a lot of time and effort into preparing the music for the Sunday evening service. Neither they nor the parish council (to whom the music is accountable), thought to make clear to the congregation how and why the music group was being set up. Although on the face of it, everyone thought this was a good idea, confirmed by the increased attendances on Sunday evenings. However, as time goes by, another 'core' group emerges on Sunday evenings: regular attenders who begin to feel that their commitment to attending the service is not being acknowledged. They begin to feel as though the music group is the 'in-group' and, by default, they are 'out.' The result is a complaint about 'the music being too loud,' which the parish council takes 'at face value.' And so on (Pavlicevic 2003: 162-3).

The situation was difficult for the youths. Pressure was felt from various groups to stop the youths from playing, get them to “do things right,” and lower their volume.

When Father Yvon was assigned to the parish of Cocagne, however, he immediately showed support for the youths and their project: “he got right into it, and he liked it,” Mylène remembers (MD-I). Although the group had fared rather well in spite of the opposition it had received from his predecessor, Father Yvon’s arrival was a breath of fresh air for the group, and the priest soon became a very influential proponent. “Without the priests’ contribution,” Jérémie shares, “we could never have done what we did” (JGo-I). The new priest, acutely aware that the group was not welcome by a number of parishioners, set out to make things easier for Shaïda. This was no easy task. The fact that there were no young people in the parish who had received the Bishop’s “institution,” as required by the Roman Church in order to perform the related tasks (Dalmais 1987: 104) was exacerbated by the group’s ignorance of various traditions. One such misunderstanding was the dividing of the ushers’ ministry; the youths were unaware that the greeting, the passing of the offertory, and the seating was traditionally relegated to the same individuals, as Dalmais explains:

In antiquity the need was felt for the services rendered by porters or doormen; their function was to welcome the faithful and show them to their places, to exclude those who had no right to take part in the liturgy, and to ensure good order in the assembly, especially when the time came for Eucharistic communion (Dalmais 1987: 108).

Because the function of the usher had been divided into three distinct parts (in order to involve the maximum number of youths), those parishioners already inclined to criticize Shaïda’s presence and communicative competence (see Chapter 7) were given ammunition with which to attack the group. The youths were not informed that this

caused eyebrows to be raised. This apparently trifling neglect (as the group understood it) significantly weakened their credibility. It was only brought up during a conflict between the band and the parish choir more than four years after they had abandoned the practice (out of necessity).

A significant victory came when Father Yvon finally agreed to institute a number of young Ministers of Communion, upon the Archbishop's acceptance. This had been the only ministry which had not been immediately organized by the group (with the exception of the celebrant's). Mylène highlights the importance of this:

"After a while, we were able to get ministers of Communion who were young. Like me, you, Joanie, Maxime- no, not Maxime- Jérémie, Christien, Nadia, all that gang became ministers of Communion to be able to give Communion during the Mass so that it would be really only youths doing it" (MD-I)

The fact that these youths were allowed to serve Communion by the Bishop gave the group credibility, as the liturgical documents stipulate that Ministers of Communion "have to be carefully chosen and trained" (Withey 1990: 160). This was proof that the local clergy as well as the Archbishop recognized not only the participation of the youths in the liturgy, but also the sacred character of their ministry. Perhaps more importantly however, it forced those who opposed the presence of the group to receive Communion from the youths' hands. For the youths, this had great symbolic power, and served to prove that despite (or perhaps because of) their youth, they were as worthy of performing this important task as other parishioners.

From Youth Mass to Youth Music

People began to flock from neighboring parishes to be a part of Shaïda's "Youth Mass." New faces volunteered to do the readings, others, the collection, while still others chose to serve the Mass or become ministers of Communion. Donia was responsible for most of the recruitment of liturgical ministers, while Adrien took care to increase the numbers of the group in charge of music ministry. Every month, Donia would call the youths in order to find people who would accept to be liturgical ministers for the upcoming Mass. "It took a lot of energy from Donia," Adrien explains, "and Donia did a great job, but there was no one to help her. She tried to get help from someone, but there was no one to help her. There was no team. No team who was ready to work in that line" (AD [MD-I]). Donia persevered, and consistently managed to involve a number of youths. Nadia was eventually recruited to help Donia with the telephone tree, as were a number of other girls from Cocagne. This made Donia's task much easier, while it also compelled youths to share their faith (at least in some respect) outside of the church walls.

As the youths got better recognized by the community Shaïda was slowly losing its fraternal atmosphere. Having originated as a way of giving the kids of the community a place of belonging, fraternity and where there were people in whom youth could confide, a place where they could come together outside classes and their family and share their concerns, ideals and hopes, the group was having difficulty adjusting to the changes which were being operated. While the youth Mass kept growing strong, opportunities to meet the other youth participating in the Mass were limited. Aside from the ten-second greeting before Mass, nothing was done to ensure youths would meet and

fraternize in this context. It was judged that nothing *could* be done, in fact, primarily because of the established cultural patterns and traditional schedules of the youths' families which did not allow for additional time to be spent at Mass. For this reason, participants rarely took the time before or after Mass to socialize. Further, because church space is perceived as "especially sacred" immediately before or after Mass, very little banter could take place within the building.

While the group itself was struggling to keep its fraternal character, the members of the Shaïda Musical Ensemble enjoyed most of the benefits of the Académie. Through their frequent rehearsals, the musicians and singers got to know each other very well. Because of the nature of *musicking*, moreover, the group quickly became tight-knit. As the group matured, and eventually became accustomed to the Mass' several parts (see Chapter 2), it expanded its repertoire (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) and learned to select, adapt, and perform songs better suited to the Roman liturgy.

While the organizers saw the need to keep a scheduled Mass, a time reserved especially for the youths, the new priest, who did not see the noise and banter of the youths as threatening the integrity of his church, insisted that the concept of a special Mass for a special group ran contrary to its corporate community-building character. It was decided that it would be easier to integrate them with the existing Dominical Mass. "The parish priest decided that he no longer wanted to make Masses for the youths," Adrien explains. "They had to be dominical Masses. So he inserted us" (AD [MD-I]). Adrien recognizes Father Yvon's efforts. "He gave us opportunities." Adrien continues:

We wanted a Mass on Sunday nights, and he made us a Mass on Sunday nights. But it was a dominical Mass. It wasn't a special Mass for the youths. And seeing as if with Shaïda, we didn't want to make a Mass on every Sunday, we still wanted a special Mass for youths. He wasn't ready for that aspect. It needed to be a Mass that was already scheduled (AD [MD-I]).

Though none could find fault with the priest's theology or reasoning, most of the group perceived his decision as "haven taken the opportunity to serve away from the youths; [the opportunity] to make a Mass that was a little special" (AD [MD-I]).

Making the best out of a bad situation, the group "started concentrating more on music." Since they no longer were responsible for anything other than the music, the youths were free to play in other parishes. Shaïda discovered that its mission (Chapter 4), from this point on, was no longer restricted to Cocagne, but extended to all the parishes of the archdiocese. The loss of the Youth Mass and the opening up of the territory to the other parishes of the diocese completed the transformation: having originated as a theatre troop, the group finally had developed into its present form, an ensemble whose purpose is to lead the music for the Roman Mass.

CHAPTER 2: NUMERICAL, MUSICAL, AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

From the moment the group officially became a band with a more or less well defined reason for being, Shaïda began to expand. This expansion was felt first and foremost in terms of the number of youths involved. When the band began to establish itself as a durable and viable outlet for expression, however, members started to realize that the group could function to help them flourish as individuals as well as grow musically and spiritually. This chapter is a history of the group from its beginnings as a band to present day, with particular attention to its members' music culture.⁹ Such background is vital to an understanding of the group's style and reason for being. Folklorist Thomas Solomon posits that an analysis of a performance that views those involved

as socially and biographically situated actors better shows how people [use] the performance event as an occasion for recreating ongoing social conflicts, through their assertion of the different values, and self-images of the [area]'s most basic social groupings according to age, gender, and marital status (Solomon 1994: 406).

⁹ Ray Allen's definition of "music culture is "a group of people's total involvement with music," including "the way they think about, organize, perform, and evaluate their music... An increasing number of ethnomusicology field studies have focused on the process of learning and composition, occasions for performance, musical terminology, ethno-aesthetics, and the symbolic meaning that musical systems hold for their tradition bearers." (Allen 1991:12)

The Leaders

Alvin Melanson, who owns a welding business, was a professional musician for more than half of his life. Having learned to play the guitar as a teenager, he got into a band at the age of 22, and played bass professionally with the same band for almost 20 years. Mostly playing in bars, the classic rock band Alvin played with were also the back-up band for a number of talent shows and open mic nights. This enabled him to develop his ear to music. “We were supposed to accompany anything, even if you didn’t know it, you know” (AM-I). One of the few Roman Catholics I’ve heard speak in terms of conversion and rebirth, Alvin and his wife Anne often share the story of how they “met Christ” and how this led them to get away from the bar scene because it was negatively affecting their marriage. He quit his band at the age of forty-one, and soon decided to get involved in the church.

Although he is the only Despres of his generation who plays a musical instrument, Adrien spent most of his life in music making, music selling, and music distributing. His mother, always playing 78 records of choral songs she acquired from the local record shop, was the first person to introduce him to music. He was fourteen when he first picked up a chromatic accordion, which was to be his life-long instrument. He then learned to play double bass, and joined a band called Dutch Mason and the Esquires. He later signed a distribution contract with Capitol Records. After the lapse of a seven-year contract with the company, he started doing some A&R with the same company. This

gave him the opportunity to work with burgeoning local artists, including Fleetwood Mack, Melinda Abyss and April Wine. Adrien also worked extensively with a number of other musicians who were already better known at the time, including Buck Owens and Glen Campbell, introducing them to radio station DJs around the Maritimes.

Having fallen in love with hydroplane racing, Adrien quit the full-time music business. He later formed an amateur group called '*Les Cocagnais*.' Borrowing from tradition, the band "took old Acadian tunes, and we put a little beat in them. We had a lot of fun with that" (AD-I2). Invited to play in the French circles in the Anglophone cities of Fredericton, Saint John, and Moncton, supporters "thought it was great that we played music and that we were French and we played French songs in French" (AD-I2). '*Les Cocagnais*' became the pioneers of Acadian music in the south-eastern part of New Brunswick. Donia remembers that "they were very popular here. They played a lot; they were the first group who dared to play French music. You know, that wasn't played in this area, French music" (DD-I3). Adrien tried his hand at song writing, and knew a measure of success, but on the whole was content to be a good accompanist. *Les Cocagnais* was to be Adrien's last on-stage music venture. The group still periodically gets together "for a house party or something like that, and we still make a little music... We play the same tunes that we played back then. We didn't learn any new ones. We sing the same songs. We haven't evolved with the music much" (AD-I2).

When Alvin and Adrien began to seek out individuals who would join the three original singers in the ensemble musical *Shaïda* (Gaelle Despres, Joanie Despres and Charline LeBlanc), they faced a difficult task. "In the beginning, [recruiting] was

difficult,” Adrien relates. “We went and asked them if there was a possibility of their coming and joining us... Some said ‘no,’ some said ‘we’ll go try,’ and there are some here, really, that we don’t know why. They resurrected. I think it’s the Holy Spirit” (AD-I). Adrien reasons that recruitment was so difficult because before the band became known, singing in a church was perceived as “uncool” for young people to do.

The First Members

During the first year of the band’s formation, finding members to join was especially difficult because of the group’s sound – too loud and edgy to attract typical choir members, and too “churchy” to interest young musicians. In his history of Christian rock, John Thompson explains that “Christian Rock [is] almost certain to preclude one from fame, prosperity, or even respect within the community of believers” (Thompson 2000: 38). That was definitely the case during the first few years of the band’s existence. Singing at church, or any other type of participation in the liturgy, for that matter, directly labelled the individual as “conservative” and socially inept amongst his peers. Martin is emblematic of the remainder of the band when he makes clear that “[i]f someone would have told me, four years ago: ‘Yeah, you’re going to play bass in churches.’ ‘What are you talking about?’ So I didn’t see myself with something like that at all” (MS-I3).

Most of the original members of the band were regular churchgoers who simply wished to make Mass more interesting by singing and creating a special space for youth involvement in the context of the Church (see Chapter 4). After the three original singers

quit the band because of the very demanding rehearsal schedules and (likely also because of the social pressures), the group came close to being dissolved. Two young girls from the neighbouring Notre-Dame parish choir joined the group after being convinced by their music teacher to do so. Mélanie Bastarache and Mélanie (Mélane) Richard took on the project. Amélie describes Mélane's experience:

In the beginning, it embarrassed her a little. It wasn't cool to sing in a church. But by doing it - I think she liked doing it so much that - I think she put all that aside, that it wasn't cool, and by doing it, it came to be - It's like - she didn't like doing it, and she did it to really pray God, and to praise Him" (AC-13).

Mélane was from a family with a strong musical background, and loved singing in church though it was at times socially difficult because of peer pressure. Because of the two Mélanies' musical backgrounds, the quality of the music created by the small group was much better. "After Mélane joined," Mylène explains, "more people started coming" (MD-I).

Nadia, who was first contacted because she was a regular churchgoer, initially became involved by doing the readings, and soon was in charge of finding youths to fill the various duties: "I started participating. I don't know. I started calling people to ask: 'Do you want to serve Mass?' or 'Do you want to do that?' So I started participating in that" (NB-I). A member of the Cocagne Parish choir, Nadia soon demonstrated interest in joining Shaïda. "I don't remember if it's me that had asked to join or if it's Adrien who had called me, or you," she relates. "It interested me, because the music was more like-different. It was not choir music, and I liked singing, so I decided to join" (NB-I). Although Nadia has not greatly influenced the group's musical aesthetics, her presence

has been momentous in terms of the group's development of spiritual depth and Catholicity.

The situation was more complicated in Jérémie's case. Having heard from Jérémie's parents that the youth could sing, Adrien made it a mission to recruit him. However, because Jérémie had been taunted and mocked by his peers for being in the St-Antoine parish choir when he was younger, he was very wary of making the same mistake again. "His parents had told us that it would be a tour de force to bring Jérémie there," Donia relates. "Because at the age he had, in the years of adolescence where the peer pressure is incredible-it wasn't evident that Jérémie was going to come sing with Shaïda" (DD-I). Jérémie recalls how he was first approached:

The one who organized that, Adrien Despres, he'd heard that I sang in my room here. I just sang in my room. I was too shy to get out of my room. I had never sung in front of anyone else, except for my parents and brothers and sisters. He told me that, that there was a group and that. In the beginning, I didn't really want to go. He organized it in some way so I'd go (JGo-I).

Adrien admits how Jérémie Goguen finally came to be present at a rehearsal:

I forced him. I played a trick on him... Jérémie had come for a World Youth Day meeting, and his brother was here to pick him up, and I said 'No, you're not leaving. I'll go bring you.' So I forced him to stay. And he didn't want to stay, he thought it was funny, and finally he decided to stay and stuck with the group for years. He's still part of the group (AD-I2).

Jérémie proved to be an indispensable resource for Shaïda. His talent as a singer helped Shaïda sound more professional, and he made the band tighter. His popularity, his shy though confident and self-assured attitude and his good looks made it easier for others to join, as his presence helped make Shaïda socially acceptable. Moreover, Jérémie's faith was already very strong, and it influenced the others.

The situation was quite similar in Amélie's case. Originally from Sainte-Anne, Amélie came from "a very musically-inclined family" (*AC-electronic communication*). She was greatly encouraged by her family to play music, and began piano lessons at the age of six. Amélie's approach to music is open and encompassing, her eclectic choice of music ranges "from classical to jazz, from reggae to rock" (*ibid*). The only condition she imposes on her choice of music is that her repertoire consists of music with "meaningful lyrics" (*ibid*). For this reason, bands such as 'The Smashing Pumpkins,' 'Powderfinger,' and 'U2,' hold a special place in her heart. However, because her rather limited income has not permitted her to purchase many non-essentials, her music collection is made up of older albums she had bought as a teenager and of downloaded MP3s. A very diverse assortment, most of the songs on her mixed CDs are arranged by mood, and those CDs which help her achieve the desired mood are given the "Amélie Seal of Approval," a small flower drawn in black on the album.

Prior to joining Shaïda, Amélie had never performed in a public setting, however, and limited her singing to accompanying her music collection in the privacy of her car. Before being approached by Adrien, Amélie was unable to envision the possibility of singing in public. Amélie went to her first rehearsal in much the same way as Jérémie. Adrien had heard that she could play piano, and decided she would be a good addition to the group. He recounts how Amélie joined:

Amélie? Well, she was always hanging at our house. And I thought she was going to be because I knew she played piano. So I thought she was going to be a person who was going to come play piano with us. And I began to push her, and she said: 'Well. OK. I'll sing' (AD-I).

Amélie remembers it quite differently: “Your father was like, ‘Hey. You should join Shaïda.’ And I said, ‘But I can’t sing well.’ He said, ‘It’s alright. You don’t have to sing well for me.’ I was like: ‘Whatever. Alright.’ So I went a few times. I just sang in the background” (AC – I4). However it transpired, Amélie came to be one of the most influential members of the band in terms of musical aesthetics, style, and approach. As with Jérémie, her attractiveness and her energetic personality made it easier for other girls to join, and her authenticity and spiritual sincerity helped the parish community accept Shaïda as a valid endeavour.

Not all of the band’s first members were recruited by Adrien like Mélane, Jérémie and Amélie; some were pigeonholed by other members of Shaïda with Adrien’s help.

Erika Leblanc, a long-time friend of mine, shares how she came to her first rehearsal:

It all started with Mylène. When she got in Marie-Jeunesse, she had to sing, so I was going to sing with Shaïda. We discussed this, and came up with the theory that no, I wasn’t singing, but she was singing anyhow. And one night, I went out with Joanie and I arrived – a big night – a long story – we arrived in the door at 9:00AM on a Sunday morning and your dad looked at me and did: ‘Oh. A good time to get here, on a Sunday morning, the Mass starting in 45 minutes. You’re going to be tired, Erika, this afternoon. You’re practicing this afternoon. We’re singing.’ ‘No problem. I’ll be there. I’ll pick up Joanie in 20 minutes to go to Mass.’ So you know, it was maybe only to save my neck, but it wasn’t really – I didn’t really have the intention of joining Shaïda more than that (EL-I).

Erika was to be a valuable asset to the band; although her talent as a singer was very limited at first, she was indispensable in terms of order, discipline and recruitment. Her impact in term of music selection and musical aesthetics, however, was limited. Aside from being considered one of the most beautiful girls in her graduating class and therefore a natural enticement for membership, Erika is a gifted coordinator, and was instrumental

in getting the band organized. She single-handedly produced Shaïda's songbook, and helped put together a number of other activities.

The Second Wave

Some members were not forced or bribed, but joined for their own reasons, often other than their will to serve the Church. Eric Babineau, a gifted punk bassist, Joel Chavarie, a punk / ska guitarist and drummer and Julien Melanson, a talented country-music drummer joined the band at approximately the same time. Although their musical aesthetics were often at odds with each other, the fact that they were at once first cousins and good friends brought them together and they managed, with Alvin (also related), to create a fusion of styles which came to be much appreciated by most members, and a wider audience.

At least three of the present members joined the group as a consequence of their participation in the preparation and their involvement in the World Youth Day pilgrimage in Toronto, in 2002. Shaïda had been invited to play at a number of preparatory Masses for the festivities, and also organized a series of special outings for the pilgrims. Because many of the members of the band also partook in the pilgrimage, many of the youth of Shaïda formed strong relationships with the other youths from the World Youth Day. Catherine Leblanc, Charles Maillet, Joelle Dufresne and Lina and Donna Richard first came in contact with the band at this point, and immediately showed interest in participating. Catherine had already lead the music-making at a number of Catholic

retreats, camps, and activities, starting with the Teen Encounter movement. When she was introduced to Shaïda, she was taken aback:

I had just heard a little bit about it, and I was thinking: 'It must be all right.' But then I heard them sing, and it was like 'OK, sign me in!' Wow! 'Right away!' Like- I knew it was beautiful and fun, but I didn't think it was beautiful and fun like that! (CL-I).

Catherine's musical background being mainly classic rock and the female pop rockers of the late 1990s (including Natalie Imbruglia and Chantal Kreviazuk), she had approximately the same aesthetics as Alvin, and their playing blended very well. Catherine describes how she experienced being a part of the group when she first joined, hinting at the influence that participation of various individuals exerts on the overall sound:

At each practice, I felt that we were one, all together, when we were singing. It came out like really well [demonstrating 'togetherness' with her hands]. And that's it. It wasn't just playing, but it was feeling what you were praying as well. So it was really like- from week to week, we finished the rehearsals, and I was already looking forward to the coming ones already. I was thinking: 'OK. What are we going to learn, and who's going to be there, and who's going to bring something' (CL-I).

As the group's director, Adrien guides the band's timing, and normally gives his opinion *as an outsider* about the overall performance. He does not normally exert any authority over the final sound achieved by the group, except in some rare instances where he judges the overall texture of a piece to be "too busy" or "boring." The final sound is rather a product of "the mix," a result of the variety of talents and music cultures. Significantly, there is no attempt on the band's part to decrease differences in singing or in sound. Catherine's 12-string pop-style strumming is not perceived to be a mismatch with Alvin's classic rock style or Martin's hard-alternative bass runs. Voices are not expected to blend either; Jacques' pop-inspired inflections, Mélane's classically clean tones, Amélie's

forceful alternative energy and Jérémie's bluegrass twang are understood as mutually enriching, the final product being a perplexing merging of sounds.

Neither Lina, Donna, Joelle nor Charles had any experience in performance or in music-making before joining the band. All four were considered tone deaf by the remainder of the group, and for this reason, they were normally grouped together with Erika and placed next to the musicians' amplifiers on microphones with lowered volumes. Their singing quickly improved, however, and they eventually graduated to being able to have operational microphones. Donna moved away to Saskatchewan approximately two years after joining the band, but her younger sister Lina stayed in the band and eventually became one of the female leads. Although Joelle's Charles' and Erika's voices greatly improved over the course of the next years, their quiet and unassuming nature significantly shaped and limited their impact on the band's sound and style.

The Third Wave – Present Day

I joined Shaïda at approximately the same time as Brian and Nathaël, my two best friends, after two of Shaïda's key musicians left for university (Julien Melanson and Eric Babineau). All three of us understood that we were to be temporary replacements until Adrien could find younger members with which to replace us, and we agreed to participate on those terms. Although I had been among the founding members of the Académie Shaïda (the musical ensemble's predecessor – see Chapter 1) and had often

replaced Shaïda's musicians out of need, I had not at that point made any significant impact on the group, aside from guiding Adrien in matters of theology. To this day, I do not feel that my participation in the band significantly impacted the group's sound, although I recognize that I have had a very important impact in terms of mission, theology, philosophy and approach. Nathaël's presence in the band was probably the most momentous in terms of style, but Brian is likely the member who had the biggest impact on the band in terms of sound. Because our histories are intertwined, I will discuss our music cultures conjointly, for the sake of conciseness.

Brian Leger's older sister initiated him to the band 'Nirvana' when he was in the seventh grade. He quickly became infatuated with Kurt Cobain's style and personae, and began to imitate the manner in which he dressed and behaved. When Cobain committed suicide in April 1997, Brian had a crisis of faith. Approximately one year after Cobain's death, Brian decided to emulate his idol, and start a band of his own, a tribute to the artistry of 'Nirvana.' He enlisted Nathaël Melanson, Izmaël Goguen and myself, and organized a meeting where we decided how we were going to go about making this happen. This was a difficult task, as I was the only one who had musical training (five years of classical piano) or had access to musical instruments (a guitar, an accordion, and a piano). It was decided that Brian would sing and play lead guitar, Izmaël would play rhythm guitar, I would play bass, and "since Nathaël was fat" (BL-*personal conversation*), he would play the drums.

Nathaël soon afterwards purchased a first drum kit, a used Baxter kit with a good selection of mediocre Sabian B8 cymbals, and Brian bought himself a no-name-brand

electric guitar and amplifier combo from the local music store. I relied on my father's old Yamaha acoustic guitar, while Izmaël purchased a Fender Squire guitar. Brian's idea for a band was a failure; the lack of equipment made it impossible for the guitars and the vocals to compete with the drums, and the lack of financial resources meant that we had to make do with what was available. The more important issue, however, was that no one really knew what playing music with other people involved.

Disillusioned, Brian stopped playing with other musicians, preferring to concentrate on perfecting his skills alone. His musical aesthetics being very limited, consisting solely of 'Nirvana,' artists who played alongside 'Nirvana' such as 'Mudhoney,' 'The Meat Puppets' and 'Sonic Youth,' and musicians Kurt Cobain covered, such as 'Black Flag' and 'The Screaming Trees,' Brian never quite developed an ear for anything other than 1990s Seattle grunge. For more than ten years, Brian practiced playing the six 'Nirvana' tablature books he owned almost exclusively. Since he did not own any equipment aside from a Fender Jaguar guitar, I had lent him a ten-watt amplifier, which he powered up with a Boss MG-1 Fuzz pedal I had given him in exchange for some bootleg 'Nirvana' albums.

After Brian's band's failure, Nathaël started experimenting with different styles and genres, and fell in love with 'Nine Inch Nails' *The Downward Spiral*, 'Nirvana's *Unplugged in New York* and 'Soundgarden's *SuperUnknown*. About mid-way through High School, Nathaël "got to learn about more bands and a bigger selection of music" (NM-electronic communication), and became interested in punk rock, electronica, and metal. Nathaël and I formed a 'Guns & Roses' / 'Pearl Jam' cover band with two other

youths from Saint-Antoine (Marcel Leblanc and Jeremy Leger). The band managed to organize a number of “successful” albeit unprofessional and poorly attended performances at coffee shops, and collectively wrote some original songs.

Following this project, Nathaël went from band to band, finally discovering Martin Saulnier’s talent as a musician. Martin became interested in music-making in much the same way as the other members, influenced by ‘Nirvana’ and ‘Green Day’: “It was cool to play that.” Martin and one of his friends made music together until Martin enlisted Nathaël to join his band. The three quickly became friends, leaving school at recess to go smoke at the horse track. The trio formed ‘Premesis,’ a ‘Radiohead’ cover band. As they progressed musically, they ventured to play songs they had written themselves. The band won Radio-Canada’s *Pop Rock 15-25* contest, and recorded three tracks professionally. The group split up soon afterwards, however, torn by internal disagreements.

A fan of video games and “sci-fi in general” (NM-*electronic communication*), this is not immediately obvious in Nathaël’s home. His interest in music, however, is immediately apparent. A number of drum kits and miscellaneous drum accessories, guitar amplifiers, microphones, mixing boards, stereo systems and speakers are scattered throughout the house, in such quantities that they have overtaken much of the living space. His bedroom is filled with posters of bands (including Alice in Chains, Soundgarden, Nirvana and Pearl Jam), and although these are not representative of his current music aesthetics, he has not taken them down because they still inspire him and set off interesting conversations with other musicians. The youth’s well-paid position at a

glass factory permits him to purchase almost everything he desires for his music. The drummer's musical aesthetics are eclectic; in his collection of five to six hundred CDs (NM-I), Nathaël has "everything from soft to hard, pop to underground, reggae, ska, punk, metal, industrial, pretty much everything except country and rap" (NM-*electronic communication*). Nathaël joined Shaïda in the fall of 2000, and managed to convince Brian to follow suit. I joined shortly thereafter, nostalgic about our first projects and eager to see where this would lead.

Brian's utter inability to appreciate, understand or replicate anything other than Seattle grunge and its related scenes had a peculiar impact on Shaïda. Instead of adjusting his style and playing in order to fit in with the remainder of the band, as did the other musicians, Brian played everything à la Nirvana. And he did it well. Although it was difficult for the other members to adjust to the new sound, most of them appreciated the resulting music, which was edgier, gutsier, and more sombre than what they had grown used to producing. Nathaël's penchant for electronica, combined with Amélie's appreciation for intense emotionality and Brian's power chords came together tightly. With the addition of this one detail, Shaïda was suddenly transformed from a talented but rather typical church choir with no sound truly its own, to a performance-ready rock band with a unique and distinctive cachet.

Jacques Doiron, having heard the new sound, joined Shaïda shortly thereafter, motivated by the atmosphere of conviviality, the edgy sound and especially by Jessica Auclair, a member of the band he'd been eyeing for some time. But the sound and atmosphere of the band were sufficient to keep him interested. "When the relationship

ended,” Moncton’s *Times & Transcript* newspaper reports, “Jacques’ commitment to Sunday morning Mass didn’t. He had the musical group Shaïda to thank for that” (Leblanc 2005). Jacques had an ear for music, and seemed to be a natural entertainer. His desire was to sing, and he knew he could sing well. In spite of his obvious talent, most members felt that Jacques’ primary reason for participating was not to serve the Lord or the community. His appetite for the limelight and his undersupplied spirituality were read by most members as being contrary to Shaïda’s mission (see Chapter 4). During my first interview with Amélie, in 2004, she voiced her concerns about Jacques; the fact that much of her criticism is in the past tense reveal her concerns were already decreasing, but her hesitation clearly shows that they were still very much present.

Jacques has a talent. And I really think he has that gift. The arrangements he had made for the *Priere a l'Esprit Saint*. I think we're an outlet for his creativity. Sometimes he worried me a little, because I feared he did it only for his glory, but I guess - like you had told me once, "if it brings him to church, well good. If that's what it takes." And there's a reason why he'd come. I know that in the beginning, his initial reason was to have exposure. But the fact that he stayed so long, and I know he'll stay for a good while still. There's something else there. Sometimes, we have our little conflicts of interests. We don't always agree on the way to do things and - He knows what he's doing and I think - I honestly think he's there for the right reasons. Sometimes - sometimes, it goes to our heads. It's fun being in front of a group and to be applauded, but I don't know. Sometimes - I don't have to bring him back to earth, he comes down on his own. (AC-I)

As the group matured, Jacques came to be better accepted in the group. Having overcome much of the grief he had felt following his father’s death and having surmounted his anger at God for allowing it, the group began to speak in terms of his spirituality blossoming, and Jacques began to be recognized as a prayerful member (JDo-I). Now considered one of the band’s pillars, both in terms of music-making and in terms of spiritual depth, Jacques is very popular and well respected among the members.

Martin Saulnier, who, like Nathaël, has learned to appreciate a gamut of musical genres, owns “over 300 CDs ranging from anything from ‘Nirvana’ to ‘Primus,’ From ‘Autumn to Ashes’ to ‘Thrice,’ even from ‘Tool’ to David Lance” (MS-*electronic communication*). Much of the equipment Martin owns came from his father, who was a professional musician when he was younger. After the death of his father, which left his family almost destitute, Martin got a job as a manager in a call center, and soon made enough money to finance his living as well as his music-making. The youth now has a dedicated “jamming room” in his house, which is crammed with a full double-bass rock kit, a keyboard, his three guitars, three basses,¹⁰ four amplifiers and a combination soundboard/power amplifier. Martin recounts how he was approached by Adrien:

‘Don’t you play bass?’ I was like: ‘Yes.’ ‘Would you come with us play?’ ‘Yeah, oh yeah’ I said. He thought I was drunk but I wasn’t. I had only drunk half a beer by that point. I was on my first one. Maybe he thought it was the 10th. So he called me in the week, and anyways (MS-I).

Although Martin was not interested in church, in the liturgy, or in coping with issues of decorum and appropriateness, the prospect of performing in the space of the Mass was very interesting for him. The idea was all the more enticing because his old jamming buddies had assured him that it was fun and the atmosphere was relaxed. As Shaïda’s bassist, Martin has brought the band to the next level. Comfortable with the surroundings, Brian, Nathaël and Martin *grooved* together. The resulting music became a blend of Brit-pop, grunge, gospel and choral music.

¹⁰ Martin’s guitars are: a Seagull 300 acoustic, a maple-necked Godin electric, and his first instrument, a Barracuda electric he had purchased from Izmaël Goguen. His basses are: a Fender Squire Musicman, a Fender Squire Jazzmaster, and a 6-string Ibanez.

It would be difficult to underestimate the impact that Brian, Nathaël, Martin and I were having on the band at this juncture, though the influence of the more senior members should nevertheless not be overlooked. However, the influence exerted on the musical style and approach of Shaïda by Alvin, Catherine and Jonathan (the rhythm guitar section of the band) was limited by these members' ability to adapt and follow the lead of others. Alvin's years of training as a professional accompanist have seriously impacted the manner in which he plays; adept at emulating a leader's style and capable of blending in with the group, Alvin's guitar playing is rarely the principal element that define the group's style.

The combination on genres represented by the members at this point in Shaïda's history attracted a number of serious musicians. Justin Pambrun, whose smooth guitar is reminiscent of Ben Harper's style, heard about Shaïda through the grapevine, and was immediately taken by their sound. At approximately the same time, Rayna Hayes joined the group and began to play violin.¹¹ Essential to both the recruitment of new members and the attraction of new supporters at this juncture was the fact that the group was *marked* as a *Catholic, youth, rock* band (c.f. Shuman 1993). The construing of the group as "marked" in such a way set up a number of binary oppositions which worked to characterize the band (such as youth-versus-old, modern-versus-traditional, rock music-versus-choral music) and to psychologically distinguish the youths from the many other

¹¹ Rayna was a part of Shaïda for almost four years, but never was a regular to the band. She no longer considers herself as part of the group, but I have elected to include her in this study because, as Patrick Mullen asserts, "it is... critical that many different voices be heard, including the 'backslider' or the 'fallen away' – a former believer who questions some of the assumptions of a particular religious belief system" (Mullen 2000: 132).

existing choirs in the area. Folklorist Amy Shuman notes that the “marked” form always carries more information, “usually to resolve an ambiguity, and the ‘unmarked’ form is what people would assume or expect” (*ibid*: 347). Indeed, for many in the parish unity, the concepts of “Roman Catholic,” “youth,” and “sacred rock music” were not only surprising as a assemblage, but mutually exclusive.

A Changing Recruitment Strategy

An analysis of the membership of the band reveals that the recruitment strategy changed dramatically over the course of the first few years. Adrien and Alvin first recruited practicing Roman Catholics with known musical talent. When this resource yielded less fruit than expected, they then recruited practicing Roman Catholics with no evident musical talent. The leaders then set out targeting non-practicing Roman Catholics with musical talent, and finally opened the doors to non-Roman Catholics with no musical talent. This strategy, albeit an unintentional spontaneous development, a result of changing needs, fluctuating membership and an evolution of theology, proved very effective; over the course of the next seven years, the band has counted over one hundred members, with a consistent membership of fifteen to twenty-five youths. To Shaïda’s credit, the great majority of those who have left report having quit the band because of a move away from the area.

Adrien acknowledges that the recruitment patterns are not the only things to have changed; the *manner* in which members are recruited have also evolved. When he was

first approached to join Shaïda, Nathaël's initial reaction was complete dismissal: "pffff! Yeah right!" He explains that "I felt like it wasn't my kind of group and like if I somehow wouldn't fit in" (NM-I). Though encouragement and pressure from Adrien, Alvin and his peers was insufficient to convince him to see for himself, the sense of being needed finally persuaded him to attend a rehearsal: "They needed someone to take over the percussions. I still felt like it wasn't my cup of tea. But my friend [Brian] convinced me to give it a shot" (NM-I). Filling a need was often the element which instigated a youth's involvement with Shaïda, and proved to be so effective an approach that it was used even when obviously irrelevant and extraneous. While Nathaël was truly called upon to replace Julien, Jessica was approached in terms of being a replacement for la P'tite Jess: "A girl left because she was moving. So they asked me if I wanted to join to replace her" (JGa-I). Although la P'tite Jess did have an important role in the group in terms of dynamics, her participation was far from essential to the group's musical functioning. This line of attack by the band's various recruiters often had the strange consequence of misleading the youths. Throughout her four-year involvement with the band, for instance, Rayna considered herself a stand-in for other violinists: "I was more of a substitute, because there are other violin players. If he was stuck, he called me" (RH-I).

Alvin relates how things have evolved since the project was first conceived:

Now the youths aren't embarrassed. They think it's OK to come now. In the beginning, it wasn't cool, but now, it's acceptable for them, and acceptable to do, and it's fun as a group, you know. To live that fraternity, and this place of belonging, it's acceptable (AM-I).

Adrien agrees, sharing that now, "we almost don't recruit them. If somebody tells us he sings, or does this, or whatever, we ask them and give them the liberty to come. And they

come automatically” (AD-I2). No longer having to press, obligate and trick youths to attend a first rehearsal themselves, the directors point out that the young adults instinctively assumed this charge. Shaïda now relies primarily on word of mouth and peer-to-peer pressure to keep its membership strong. Brian relates the conversation he had with an ex-girlfriend, which resulted in her periodically singing with the group:

She asked: ‘Do you still play guitar?’ and all that. I told her [about Shaïda], and sometimes, and all that, but that I don’t have time, but I like to, neh neh neh. So I asked her about when she played in church, choir, there, and asked her: ‘How do you like singing?’ [imitating Natalie] ‘Oh, I don’t know. I don’t sing well.’ ‘Fuck off!’ [Laughs] So yeah (BL-I).

Justin shares how he was recruited by a mysterious stranger:

Somebody approached me from the church, actually. I was just out at a brunch, and then they said: ‘What’s your interest- what are you interested in?’ I said ‘Ah, I like playing guitar and et caetera.’ He said “Ah! Come on out and practice with us.’ Basically. So I did, and there I was (JP-I).

For Rayna, it was much the same thing: “I had a few friends who were in it, and they really liked it. I heard really good things. So I thought I was going to try it” (RH-I).

Why Youths Continue to be Dedicated

Once they have joined Shaïda, the youths report staying in the band for a host of different reasons. Most of the members report they keep coming for “the sensation of friendship and community within the group” (NM-*electronic communication*), “because of the fraternity there is in the group” (AD-I). Adrien explains:

Youths today are youths who want to fraternize. They want to talk, to say hello, to hug. And in the church, they don’t find that. They find it with Shaïda, because they come and we let

them be. They tell us their story, and they will talk and joke and laugh. And this makes them more comfortable with the building itself (AD [MD-I]).

“There’s always interesting people to chat with, or to be with,” Joelle explains (JDu-I).

Over and above the sensation of friendship and fraternity is curiosity about what attracts other youths to the group. Mylène’s version of Nathaël’s first rehearsal makes this clear:

We were at a meeting at Alvin and Anne’s to go to the World Youth Day. And he was coming to the World Youth Days because me and you and Amélie were coming, and it was going to be fun. And then he said, ‘I’m going to the World Youth Days because you said it had changed your lives in Toronto, and I don’t believe you. I have to go see for myself.’ He said that to the group. And now, I see that it did that for Shaïda as well. It was like, ‘Yeah, I’m going to join Shaïda because you say it’s fun and all that. And honestly, Mass isn’t fun. So I’m going to go see for myself’ (MD-I).

The idea of a group such as Shaïda is unheard of in most of French-speaking Canada, and inevitably catches the attention of youths who are “searching for something more” (AC-16), as many of the members of Shaïda make plain (see Chapter 3 for a discussion on this).

Making Members Less Shy, increasing Self-Esteem

One of the most widely acknowledged consequences of participation in Shaïda amongst members of the group are the effects belonging, performance, and music in general have on a person’s self-esteem and confidence. Catherine shares that being a part of Shaïda developed her self-esteem, “I’m less stuck [inside myself] now. I’m really more relaxed. [Being in Shaïda] makes me less shy about talking to others” (CL-I). She admits that in the beginning, she was too shy to be placed next to the other musicians, in front of

the choir, “I wanted to be completely hidden, and I didn’t want there to be any focus on me at all. I didn’t even want to be plugged in the speaker. I didn’t even want to play!” (CL-I)

To compound Catherine’s apprehension about playing in front of a group was her uncertainty about her ability to follow the music, “I didn’t have enough confidence to think I could follow the drum, the bass, the singers, and everyone together” (CL-I).

Catherine is likely the member whose progress is most apparent. She shares that before Shaïda, she “even needed to eat chocolate to be able to talk!” (CL-I) Now comfortable with playing, Catherine has often been asked to lead the group. Amélie, along with most other members, is convinced Catherine would be an excellent lead. “Catherine could do that in a second, but I think she lacks the confidence” (AC-I). Catherine has considered taking on the lead, but has not yet wanted to make the serious commitment it entails. Amélie adds that her reason for not having yet taken the step “may be because she’s too humble; she doesn’t like having too much attention on her” (AC-I). Donia concurs with Amélie: “She doesn’t like to be the star, but she could be. She’s very humble. I think [Shaïda] gives her self-confidence” (DD-I).

The youth relate how the atmosphere of open-mindedness, camaraderie and acceptance found in the group helped them better appreciate both who they are as individuals and in relation to others. “I think Shaïda helps her [Jessica F] see how beautiful she is, how precious she is” (DD-I). High School in New Brunswick, as elsewhere, often negatively impacts an individual’s sense of self. Lina shares: “I had difficulty because I always thought I was judged by people, and people were always

looking at me with a face and like, ‘Oh, yeah, look at her’” (LR-I). Singing with Shaïda and being given solo parts helped her realize that her bashfulness was rooted in self-doubt and fear, and has allowed her to become more extraverted: “I was more of an introvert before, and it changed me” (LR-I).

While few members were comfortable about sharing their thoughts on others’ progress, a number of informants offered very detailed descriptions. “I saw [a certain member] flourish. To have enough confidence that she was able to have a boyfriend, and to be well in her skin, and to lose weight. She’s beautiful. She’s more beautiful than she’s ever been” (DD-I2). For Nadia, Joel has been the most transformed of the members, whose evolution is “like day and night” (NB-I). When talking about Lina, Donia shares: “I saw her change a lot since the beginning with Shaïda. I see her more glowing, and it has given her more confidence in herself” (DD-I).

For Nadia, it is clear that performance is closely linked to member’s psychological and social betterment. Answering a question on what she would consider changing in Shaïda’s operation, she immediately volunteered her thoughts on the importance of opportunities for performance. She adds, “More opportunities for everyone to do something. Sometimes, there are some that are just along for the ride. If they don’t want to, no, but giving everyone the opportunity to do something. To show their talent” (NB-I). For Amélie, Shaïda helps enhance its members’ self esteem. She explains that “the fact of simply belonging” is what makes this possible. “Most people who are there [in Shaïda]... were just invisible – I was just invisible – in school... To come together and do something” (AC-I4). Mylène asserts that Shaïda helped her have confidence in herself by

showing her that she could be a leader in the Church. She explains:

I'm not 100% capable of it yet, because I still have a lot of stuff to write- to learn. I want to be a leader in the church, I want to make a difference, and I want to keep being involved. And it's made me realize that the church is a big part of my life. That I love the church, that I love the church community. It's helped me see that it's important to have the church, it's important to have God in one's life, because I was able to see those changes in all those youths. I was able to see everyone come and go. I've been there since the beginning, so I see the good it does to have youths involved in the church, and to give them the opportunity to be trusted, to be given the opportunity to express themselves, to see how they want to live their faith, to say how they want to participate, and how just being there- even if they just want to be there and sing at three feet from the mic. Who cares! They want to be there, and one day, it'll maybe make a difference in their lives. So it inspires me to want to do that as well" (MD-I)

It is clear that when a change is perceived in an individual, it is impossible to accurately determine the impact membership actually had on this change. Donia is careful about this matter: "I'm not saying that it's only Shaïda who's changing these young people. They make their paths in other ways in their lives and they grow and age and mature. I think Shaïda helps them mature maybe more healthily" (DD-I). For the youths, however, the difference is often so great that they do not hesitate to recognize the ensemble's influence. Erika shares: "I don't live the same way I used to two years ago, there. It's all to do with Shaïda. Everything falls into that, you know. It changed the way I live. I'm happier, I'm more joyful" (EL-I).

Serving the Church and the Community

Another reason for some to perform is the impact that the band members perceive they have on the Church and the community. Justin explains that he plays "to put smiles on people's faces in church. It changes the whole atmosphere of it, and you know, we add

a little bit of, you know, twists to it. It's a little different, it's a little more lively" (JP-I).

For Martin, it is much the same:

I have a lot of good feedback from everybody. There are people I work with who happened to go to at Masses where Shaïda was playing and they came up to me and said: 'Yeah, that's pretty good, what you're doing there. It peeps it up when you're at church.' They think it's fun (MS-I).

Martin makes clear that most members of Shaïda are motivated by a desire to serve the Church and the community. Addressing the question of why Joel remains in the band,

Martin explains:

I see him as a person that's really Catholic.¹² Who's really there for the Holy Spirit. He's there to pray at the same time. He's there for the atmosphere. He's there to add atmosphere. That's what he's there for, more so. He's there because it's a church activity. And at the same time, by singing, it helps him to pray (MS-I).

Jonathan shares the same reason for being in the band, explaining that Shaïda is "a good group to play at Masses and all that – to do volunteer work and that. To please the people. To make them pray more" (JM-I). "People really enjoy what we're doing," Nathaël adds, "It helps liven up mass and show that some changes are good." He continues: "and I have to admit, it *is* pretty satisfying to wail on the drums at church" (NM-*electronic communication*).

Participation in Shaïda is also perceived as an excellent opportunity to make music and to hone musicianship skills. This fact is very clear to most musicians. Justin shares his incentive to play: "I do it for the music and then I do it for the whole experience of it. It's really the music that brings me to church" (JP-I). He explains:

¹² To be "really Catholic," according to most members of Shaïda, is to give priority to religiosity and dogma to the detriment of humanitarianism (see Chapter 3).

It's a great humbling experience with playing with other very talented musicians and musicians that are just trying to learn. Everybody's trying to learn from each other, I guess. As musicians and I think everybody kind of works off each other as human beings. I don't know. We kind of learn a little bit from each other, and, it's kind of like a little community, in a sense. We all kind of know each other, and kid around (JP-I).

Martin shares the same motivation: "My motivation? It's because it's music" (MS-I).

Martin identifies Alvin's reason for participating as related to music as well: "He's always been driven by music. He really likes- you know. He's there for the music. So basically, he combines two things he's passionate about [Music and religion]. He combines those two things in one" (MS-I).

When Charles told me "I don't know if I'd add something. I don't think so. I wouldn't change anything," I sarcastically answered that "Shaïda is like the Kingdom of God. It's perfect." His response surprised me: "For me, it is. Well. It doesn't compare to the Kingdom of God, but I wouldn't change anything" (CM-I). Nadia is of the same mind as she rationalizes: "I know there are things that don't always work, and sometimes we don't get along, well. I don't know. It works anyhow. No, I mean- we can't change something and expect it to become perfect. I wouldn't change it" (NB-I). When I pressed her to justify her response, she explained: Even if we changed something in Shaïda, we can't imagine that it's going to be perfect. There are always things we'll not be in agreement with (NB-I). Catherine rationalizes that

if we were all already too good, and we'd all know how to play to perfection, what would be the use of coming? We wouldn't need to practice. And we wouldn't learn to know each others' strengths. We all depend on one another (CL-I).

Making use of their talents is a key reason why many youths become interested in the band. Donia relates why she believes Jacques chooses to participate in the band: "it's

clear that Shaïda really makes him live. Well. He likes the stage, he loves to sing, and he has a nice talent, a nice voice, and Shaïda permits him to put that talent– to use it, his talent” (DD-I). The same is true for Brian. Jonathan identifies Brian’s reason for being in the band as being “To play guitar. He’s already good, so maybe to ameliorate himself or something like that” (JM-I). Stéphane is of the same mind, but also specifies another reason: “To practice guitar. To practice the talent Jesus gave him. And to practice in His name” (SH-I).

Musical Improvement

“Being there for the music” is not limited to *playing*. The discourse of “improvement” and “betterment” is a fundamental aspect of participation in the band. Members use it to speak *to* each other as well as *about* each other, and include various forms of improvement. “It’s very interesting to see members come and go over the years but somehow the group always finds a way to fall on its feet,” Nathaël explains, “The group never stops expanding and improving” (NM-I). Lina shares her experience starting out: “I was really shy. I sang with my throat voice, and my head voice. Now, I sing more with my inner voice” (LR-I). Mylène is astounded by Lina’s progress: “She was so shy that she sang false. Now, Lina is able to do the harmony really well” (MD-I).¹³ For Stéphane, the change was not only in terms of talent, but rather generalized: “Before I got

¹³ This comment is significant because the ability to harmonize is one of the most highly prized talents in the group.

in Shaïda, I had more of a little clear voice, like a little girl's voice, we'll say. And now, it's more like a guy's" (SH-I).

As singers improve, so do musicians. Improvement is so marked that simple participation is expected to operate the change. "He's [Jonathan] going to be good," Adrien affirms. "He's young, still. But he doesn't have your experience. And he's not good with tempos. You know. He's still learning. He's learning from you" (AD [CM-I]). Speaking on behalf of Brian, Martin explains:

He wants to improve himself in music, and it's a different musical style. Right now, he's like me. He's in the process of discovering that: you know what? There's more than grunge. There's more than metal. There's more than rock. The other kinds of music, maybe we thought it was silly the first times, when we started playing, but guess what: you can improve yourself with that (MS-I).

According to Adrien, however, Martin's rock influence is all too evident at times: "He's starting to be very good. Sometimes he plays around too much. He does too much stuff, but-" (AD [CM-I]). A shining example of change according to those who knew him prior to his joining Shaïda is Jérémie. After highlighting how shy he was before Shaïda, Mylène discusses how successful the youth is presently: "He does shows by himself, he sings at weddings. He's actually popular. People here love him right out. He sang at Clement [the local High School], in front of everyone. He was one of those singers at Clement that everyone likes" (MD-I).

Spiritual Depth and the Sacred Fruits of Performance

Musical betterment is considered second only to stage presence and spiritual depth in the discourse of improvement. These elements are conceived of as so closely related that they are typically lumped into one category. Jacques explains how he hopes participation will impact him and the community: “It makes me grow in music at the same time. It helps me pray. And I hope that it can help others at the same time” (JDo-I). Mylène describes Amélie’s progress:

Amélie, when she came, it was a huge surpassing for her. She liked singing, she always liked singing, she always sang really well, but nobody knew it. Nobody thought Amélie could sing that well because she was so shy, and she was so- I don’t know which word to use. Introverted, almost (MD-I).

Adrien agrees, adding that when Amélie first started to sing, she “only sang with a little voice.” He explains: “I couldn’t make her sing. She had trouble- she was very very shy. Now I can’t shut her up” (AD-I).

Jacques neglects to consider a number of members when he declares:

Everyone that’s there, one way or another, they have something for music. Be it to play an instrument, or singing, or be it what it may, they all have something, and it gives them the opportunity to show their talent, or at least to practice it to get better.” (JDo-I)

Jacques’ older brother is a case in point. “Denis almost never sings,” Nadia explains. “I think it’s more to- maybe more than Jacques, for Denis, it’s maybe more for God [that he participates in Shaïda]. I don’t know. It’s hard to judge” (NB-I). When I spoke to Erika about why *she* joined the group in the first place, it was quite clear that it was not because of her talent – she dislikes singing and lip-synchs most of the time. Her presence in the group serves as her offering to God (EL-I). Although his reason for initially joining the

band was quite different, Martin quickly came to understand his playing at Mass as his offering to the Church, in the same order as “the person who does his part doing the collection, and like Redball¹⁴ who passes the books at the entrance. It’s like I give myself to the Church. It’s like my volunteering, in a way” (MS-I2). Dominique Dupuis, whose talent as a fiddler has allowed her to perform in front of crowds of over fifty thousand and has allowed her a great number of European tours, does not need the exposure, the practice or the networking possibilities the others may benefit from. She reports she joined Shaïda for the same reason as most of the others, as Jérémie explains: “God gave me an incredible talent, of being able to play violin like that. It’s my way of thanking God” (JGo-I). Dominique’s motivation for playing with Shaïda is clear to most other band members. “She received a gift and she wants to share it,” Charles explains, “That she doesn’t [want to] keep it to herself, I think that’s what motivates her” (CM-I). Jessica explains that “It’s a way of giving back to her community” (JGa-I).

Some members, like Amélie, explain that they take part in Shaïda primarily because it allows them to experience a closeness with God; “Singing is my prayer to God, it’s my alone time with Him, even though I am surrounded by others when I do it. Nothing but the present moment matters” (AC-I2). Justin explains that this music brings him spiritual growth: “It definitely settles some emotions sometimes, and it brings me where I want to be” (JP-I). Catherine explains that spiritual fruits were an unexpected additional benefit. “I didn’t expect that it would be so prayerful in the beginning,” she

¹⁴ “Redball” is the pseudonym of a well-known and well-loved person in Cocagne, who hitch-hikes all around the province to serve the community.

states, “but I quickly saw what it was. And how much fun it could be as well” (CM-I).

This maturing of members’ spirituality is apparent to the leaders, who recognize that “it’s not just to perform for many of them anymore. The song has become prayer for them, they now take it seriously, and I see it as a ministry they do for the church” (AM-I). Alvin explains why he believes this happens:

They’re part of the church, they contribute, and give. And even if in the beginning, there are some who start... [in order to] be with friends, or to just be able to perform, from week to week, they progress; something happens in them, the youths evangelize themselves. If you look at Amélie singing, she transmits her faith, it’s contagious. And for others, whether or not we want to, we affect each other, we’re contagious (AM-I).

This idea of “contagion” is not unknown to the youths in the group. Justin puts it in a different way: “I think everybody kind of works off each other as human beings” (JP-I). Donia explains how she manages to allay her concerns about members who join for the “wrong” reasons:

when we do it, we know that they’re just seeds, it’s just sowing. That we see the fruits or not does not really concern us, because we know that down the road, the children of those youths will profit from it, or someone else will see them. It’s the Lord’s harvest; it isn’t ours (DD-13).

“There is a risk involved in allowing excess,” John Fiske writes, “for that allows meanings to get out of control.” He continues: “the power of the left is as open to carnivalesque inversions and evasions as is that of the right, but this is a risk that must at times be taken if the progressive is to be the popular” (1989: 187). Adrien’s faith informs him that the Holy Spirit is the reason why youths join the group (AD-I2). A sceptic might understand it otherwise, although the organizers point out the fact that Shaïda has been successful and has kept a united front for as long as it has is remarkable, and should speak for something.

Recruitment Policy

Although the Roman Church calls on musical directors to be concerned with both “technical skill” and “spiritual quality” (*Musicam sacram* 67), most of the youth of Shaïda don’t believe there is an enforced recruitment policy. While Lina defines Shaïda as “a group of youths from anywhere who show their faith by singing songs during the Mass” (LR-I), she articulates that there are no prerequisites for membership aside from musicianship. When discussing Shaïda’s recruitment policy, Lina explains:

“I don’t think there really is one. You either have to play a musical instrument or sing. That’s basically it. You don’t really have to do anything else, other than that. You don’t need to be of a certain age, you don’t need to be smart, you don’t need to be poor or rich” (LR-I)

Jacques concurs, but is more careful about addressing the issue of musicality: “Anybody can come if they’re interested in joining. And if they’re close to being able to make a note on key, they’re not going to be laughed at; they’re as accepted as the rest of us anyhow. And they can learn. There’s no one who’s refused” (JDo-I).

The present members of Shaïda are from very diverse backgrounds and geographically distant areas. Some members are very ardent believers in Christ and confident members of the Roman Catholic Church, while some doubt if they ever will be baptized and others consider themselves atheists. As discussed, several members have an extensive background in music making, while others could not even be said to have a background in music appreciation. The likes and dislikes of individuals vary greatly, as do their values, goals and career prospects. Currently, every member of Shaïda shares one

thing in common: the ability to function in French, although even this has not always been the case.

Abandoning their reservations and fears about excesses and misuse to the action of the Holy Spirit in guiding the Church, the group's organizers are comfortable with letting the youths make decisions about style, genre, and performance. Alvin shares his thoughts on the matter:

we know it's good, but we don't know what the Holy Spirit- how he acts in all that. There are things that are done in the invisible that we don't know- that we can't really predict, there are things that are linked- one thing brings another. And down the road, we look at that, and we say 'Yeah, we would have never thought it would have brought us here, you know' (AM-I)

For Jessica, it is clear that the Holy Spirit has a large part in the functioning of Shaïda, and attributes this to the serene atmosphere cultivated by the members. "I really love being in," she shares, "to listen to different music. When you listen to music in television and all that, it's so violent. But you listen to music there, and it's so calm. It's like it takes away the [everything else] – the bad in our hearts." Jessica is definitive about the band's role in her life: "I think it's good for me to be in Shaïda. I could never quit" (JGa-I).

Are They Typical Members of a Choir?

The members of Shaïda, although many of them testify to being inspired by the Holy Spirit to serve the Church and their community, do not necessarily identify themselves as typical members of their type of band. Not perceiving herself as a typical member of a church band, Amélie identifies "a typical member" as being someone who

would “button up all the buttons on her shirts, be well ‘polished,’ has the voice of an angel to take the worshippers into deep prayer, and is a model Christian goody-goody” (AC-I4). Although she tries her best to look “respectfully decent and modest” when she sings at church, she does not want to look boring: “I’ll comb my hair and wear clean clothes, but I also have a pierced lip- not very common among church-goers” (AC-I4). She shares: “I don’t think many of us will actually pray in a manner that conforms, I guess - *actually praying* like saying a chaplet, whatever. But aside from that, I don’t know. I’m not what you’d call a Jesus Freak, whatever (AC-I). Amélie lists a number of reasons why she wouldn’t be considered “typical”; she’s not the type of girl who goes to all the retreats (although she does attend many), and who will “go around with her Bible and preach at the top of her lungs” (although she does say: “it doesn’t embarrass me to defend my faith anytime.”). Amélie lists other reasons: lack of formal voice training, her penchant for violent films and music with strong and/or offensive language, and the fact that she curses and likes “the occasional drink.”

Likewise, Nathaël does not feel he has the “look” of a “typical church band member.” With his baggy clothes, his long dreadlocked hair, his ZZ-Top-like beard and his earring, Nathaël often earns himself puzzled stares from older parishioners. Like most youths, however, Nathaël gave a yes/no answer to the question. Nathaël feels like a typical member because he is “part of the Shaïda team and that’s the only thing that counts.” He recognizes that “Appearance-wise, I certainly don’t look (clothes, beard, long hair) like a typical member of a church band,” but he balances this with the fact that “when it all comes together, it’s pretty obvious that I belong there” (NM-*electronic*

conversation). In an email interview, Martin Saulnier associated his being a regular member to being a typical member: “Oh yeah!! ‘Cuz I hardly miss practice and I have yet to miss any shows/mass! People are use to seeing [me] by now” (MS-I3). In the same vein, Martin writes: “I’m not like the stereotypical people that go to Mass necessarily, but I see myself with Shaïda as someone who belongs there. I’m always there. I rarely miss practice” (MS-I3). When I asked him again over the telephone, he repeated the same reasons, and added that he understood that he belonged there: “I see myself with Shaïda as someone who belongs there. You know, I’m always there. I rarely miss practice. I’m there— I haven’t missed a Mass yet since I’m there” (MS-I4).

Affirming that she doesn’t believe most of the band would look like the “typical member,” Amélie admits that Charles (the 24-year old who desire to become a priest) and Erika (the 25-year old “good girl”) could very well pass as such. The musical director in charge of the group agrees that most of the members are atypical: “If you ask me if they take it seriously, I would say yes, they take it very seriously. Are they typical members of a church band? No, I think it’s got a lot to do with fraternity” (AD-I3). In a very convoluted manner, Amélie asserts that Adrien is not the typical leader of a church band either:

“[He] is a man of faith. Although your dad is not more - he’s not as - I don’t know. I know he really believes in prayer and that, but I think he has his own way of practicing, like - not that he invented anything, it’s just - I don’t know. He has a different way” (AC-I5).

Amélie writes that it is “much more realistic to have someone like [her] singing in church than what [she] described... as the typical member” (AC-I2). In fact, many of the youths of the band have shared with me their thoughts on the importance of being perceived as

“cool” by their audiences. Shaïda’s “mission of reaching youth in church is more feasible if we’re *not* typical,” writes Amélie (for a discussion on the importance of being “cool” and a description of the group’s mission, refer to Chapter 4). For the adult leaders, it is clear that the youths are in the right place. Adrien explains: “If you ask me if they take it seriously, I would say yes, they take it very seriously. Are they typical members of a church band? No” (AD-I).

Typicality is not the only issue at hand here, however, and I suspect that it is far from being the main one. Although the youths do not consider themselves typical of the type of group in which they are involved, they are nonetheless “more typical” than most other youths in the area. An “arena for the negotiation of identity, attitudes, and morality,” performance in the context of the Roman Mass is, not unlike the Bolivian song duelling that folklorist Thomas Solomon has examined, also “a vehicle for the (re)construction of culture and social relationships” in the parish of Cocagne, “a process that reach[es] beyond the performance itself” (Solomon 1994: 405).

Through performing with Shaïda, most of the youth members of the group have acquired a Roman Catholic communicative competence, an understanding of the meaning of the Roman Mass, a rich lexicon of religious and spiritual themes, and an ability to discuss intelligently on the various issues in the diocese of Moncton. Their playing, in short, has socialized them into the religious life of the parish. However, members are acutely aware of the politics which govern how they are perceived, and systematically categorize themselves and their group as “other” to avoid the socially damaging stereotype of a “church choir.”

CHAPTER 3: BELIEF

Choice

The youths of Shaïda have, as most other young Canadians, grown up with access to modern long-distance mediums of telecommunication such as the radio, the telephone, and the television. Moreover, most members of the band, generally from middle-class families, have had access to computers and the Internet since their teen years. The impact of modern media on the youths' sense of self, on their experience of life, and on their worldview is not to be discounted. Roman Catholic theologian Henri Nouwen explains that since their advent, people have been exposed to "divergent and often contrasting ideas, traditions, religiosities, convictions, and life styles" (1972:10). Through these mass media, he explains, modern man "is confronted with the most paradoxical human experiences" (*ibid*).

This confrontation with various strands of thought, philosophies and human experience, coupled with the authority of modern science, has made it more difficult for individuals to give credence to a single belief or system of thought to the exclusion of others. This state of affairs, often referred to as Postmodernism, "assumes diversity, encourages pluralism, and tolerates moral ambiguity. In a sense, it evens the playing field, making multiple points of view desirable, with no one having a lock on 'truth'" (Blythe 2002, 196).

Most members of Shaïda are aware of the nature, purpose and specific beliefs of other world traditions, and, like most youths in the First World, are in frequent contact with a number of individuals from diverse backgrounds and holding different beliefs. Such contact is made possible through communications media such as e-mail and instant messaging services, travel, and the multicultural settings of various university campuses they attend or have attended. For these French-speaking youth of New Brunswick, “[r]eligion, like so many other things, has entered the world of options, life-styles, and preferences” (Davie 1999: 75). The present-day problematic of religious choice faced by youths is bolstered in the context of Roman Catholicism by Vatican II’s official recognition of the value of other faiths and the insistence of a number of contemporary Roman Catholic theologians that a “plurality of ways within every great religion is an ethical and religious responsibility” (Tracy 1987: 95-6; in Dillon 1999: 16). The Council’s *Decree on Ecumenism* officially recognizes Protestants as not only true Christians but that the Holy Spirit works through their churches and ecclesial communities (*Unitatis redintegratio*). This is illustrated by Robert Burns’ comment on the pre-Vatican II angst and xenophobia about Protestantism in the Roman Church: “In other words, they are saved not despite but because they are Protestant” (1992: 149). Since Vatican II, a number of formal dialogues have been undertaken between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican, Lutheran, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches, as well as with a number of other Christian communities. Burns notes that the results of these interchanges have been startling and mutually enriching (*ibid*: 153). All parties concerned have at least inched towards the position of the other and become more accepting.

In addition to Roman Catholicism's official recognition of Protestantism as an acceptable and even laudable path in the Christian faith and John Paul II's convivial meetings with the various Orthodox Patriarchs, a concern for political correctness, fairness and justice issued from modern sensibilities, coupled with an exposure to a number of cultures once considered esoteric, regulates the xenophobic inclination of individuals, and tempers the youths' ideas about other faiths. "Other" faiths, through these mechanisms, come to be perceived by the youth (almost) as positively as their own. Kimon Sargeant, writing about the cultural shifts presently occurring within evangelical Protestantism, posits that the post-baby boom generation is a "generation of seekers" which

chooses freely from an increasingly diverse cafeteria of spiritual options, not only in religion but also in other institutions such as the family and interest-based associations. There is a broad movement in American society 'toward de-centralization and a reshaping of structures to fit the needs of individuals. [...] Today's culture of choice... empowers people to create new types of communities and ways of mobilizing. We are observing, to use sociological terms, the shift from religion as an ascriptive identity based on birth to an achieved identity based on choice. This shift is at the core of the emergence of consumerism as a primary characteristic of American religious practice." (2000: 11)

Although these sweeping statements should be taken at face value, Sargeant's comments fairly accurately describe the position of the youth of Shaïda. When discussing the nature of the Roman Catholic Church, Jacques limits his participation in it to "That's the religion we were raised in" (JDo-I). Like the other members of Shaïda, Jacques is aware of the existence of other faiths, but is unwilling to convert:

I've heard about other religions, and I mean- that's my religion, so I'm not going to go outside that, and I do my best, like I said, to do Jesus' mission, to love and that. And I'm not going to tell you it's the most important part of my life and that's what I think about each second, but it's still there anyhow. It's sure that it does something anyhow.

Jacques has faith in the Roman Church's guidance, and he understands his faith as something which automatically, without his having to rationally direct it.

Concerns about the validity of various other faiths are often voiced indirectly and seldom explicitly because of the context in which rehearsals and performances occur. These concerns are frequently articulated whenever participants judge a priest to have been either particularly tactless or outstandingly diplomatic in a sermon regarding other belief systems. Few songs in the band's active Mass repertoire include references to other faiths or belief systems. This scarcity does not indicate that Shaïda's members are unconcerned with the issue, as it is very much part and parcel of the group's overall worldview. Rather, the scarcity is chiefly the result of the various obstacles posed by the salvation-centered liturgical calendar, the Mass' emphasis on God rather than Man, and the form of the Mass itself. Of the few songs which do discuss an openness to other faiths, *Enfants de l'humanité* is by far the most evidently humanistic. The main theme of the song, which was composed by Mélane to be played at the April 2006 CD launch concert, is the war-triggering emphasis of many on "distinctions of religion, of condition, of purity [and of] sinfulness" (Appendix 1).

In interviews, conducted outside the church edifice, members were much more at ease to speak their minds about their openness to other faiths. Martin shares that "There are many religions I find beautiful. You know, as beautiful as Catholicism" (MS-I). Martin makes it clear that he feels there are no perfect belief systems by taking Buddhism as an example: "Buddhism. There are beautiful things in that. Yet there's a lot of sexism in that. How women aren't allowed to be Buddhist because they bleed once a month, and

they believe in 'cleanliness is next to godliness' and all that" (MS-I). As Martin takes Wicca as an example of a belief system he feels is unfairly and summarily condemned, Jacques makes the same point about Islam, concluding that "in the end, when you think about it, all religions are pretty much similar. They all have their differences, but they're all pretty much similar... The large majority all have the same message, to love one another and to make peace. Not to make war" (JDo-I).

Although slightly less than one third (30%) of Americans believe that all religions are really praying to the same God but using different names (Barna 1999), Catherine voices the opinion of the majority of the band by limiting the main difference between religions to the image of the deity worshipped. She moderates the issue of religious affiliation by disregarding personal choice and positioning religious belief as culturally and geographically determined:

Each person adores who their religion asks them to. Or proposes to them. For us, it's Jesus Christ and God, but in different places, there are other things. Each religion is [made for us] to recognize that we're under someone. And that we need that strength to help us in the world (CL-I).

Jessica, who, because of her young age and her conservative family background is probably the most limited in the group in terms of exposure to other faiths, nonetheless voices that "everyone needs to believe in something. Some people believe in Buddha, in a number of religions" (JG-I). Although hesitant to confirm the authority of other deities and readily discloses her belief that Roman Catholicism is the best path to follow (a statement very few members of the band would venture to make), she accentuates the universal need to "follow a religion and follow it well" (JG-I). For most members of Shaïda, the issue of other faiths is not only one of image but one of pure semantics, as

voiced by Amélie: "I knew there was something, I knew there was a force bigger than me, but if you called it 'God' or if you wanted to call it anything, it didn't bother me" (AC – 14).

Roman Catholicism is dominantly the most common faith practiced in French Acadia. Although the number of Roman Catholic churches in the counties of Kent and Westmoreland is less than a third of that of various Protestant denominations collectively, an overwhelming majority of Francophones consider themselves to be Roman Catholic. What is more, the percentage of people who actively take part in the life of the local Roman Catholic Church is amongst the highest in the country. Among several possible explanations, the most widely posited reason for this is found in the important number of scholarly works on Acadian identity and religious practice (Jolicoeur 1981; Labelle 2003): the Acadians' sense of the import of tradition. Anthropologists have demonstrated that tradition is a common reflex mechanism of minority groups in the face of cultural assimilation by geographically proximate majorities (see, for instance, Le Roux 1998; McEvoy 2000), and research has demonstrated that this holds true in the case of French Canada outside Québec (c.f. Gilbert 1991; Arseneault 1994; Johnson 1994). The same factors which ensure the survival of the language can be said to safeguard the survival of the church.

Over and above the tendency of minority cultures to protect their interests through a failure to assimilate, the Roman Catholicism of the Acadians in the counties of Kent and Westmorland is limited and protected by their geographic distance from major centers, limiting both choice and opportunity. The shielding effect of this geographic distance is

intensified by the French-English language barrier and the social distance between the two groups. Further diminishing Acadians' chances of converting to Protestantism in this area are traces of Counter-Reformation thought, mainly held by the ever-present "older generation," but still very much alive in the outlook of the band members.

In the rural areas of the Kent and Westmorland counties, few new religious faiths have managed to implant and manifest themselves amongst the French-speaking population. The Anglican Church, the numerically strongest presence in the area among Anglophones, has a theology and approach that is far too proximate to the Roman Church's to warrant the difficulties of conversion and the impediments caused by language barriers. The Presbyterian Church, the United Church, and the Methodist church, whose individual presence in the area is relatively weak and whose outreach programs to Roman Catholics are not yet established, are the only other numerically strong traditions in the area, aside from the various evangelical churches. The small numbers of non-Christian religious groups, limited to transient minorities (including North-African students at l'Université de Moncton, transportation workers and contract personnel), and small groups with little interest in the conversion of French Catholics, have had a negligible impact on the conversion of Acadians, although their presence has significantly impacted the overall flavour of the religious environment.

Of the few Protestant denominations established in the area and attracting Acadians, evangelicalism is the only system that has known a small measure of success. Many of these churches have followed the North American trend to abandon the old forms of church because they are no longer considered effective due to significant

cultural changes which “have created an environment in which religious leaders can no longer take for granted the loyalty of their congregations - especially their children” (Sargeant 2000: 11). The new form of church created is more focussed on small group meetings in addition to modernized church services, with high energy programs for all ages/groups, featuring “practical” messages, popular music, and the use of high-tech audio-visual equipment.

The evangelical churches have not succeeded, in general, to attract Acadian Roman Catholics of the rural areas of Kent and Westmorland Counties. This failure is perhaps mainly due to Acadians’ general lack of interest in “religion” and mistrust of conservatism accompanied by a keen interest in mysticism (an interest that is very well catered to by the Roman Church in the area through various programs). Another important factor is the evangelical churches’ failure to establish a large enough core of Francophones; most of the few French-speaking evangelicals in the area are dispersed among larger, more “attractive” (with more abundant resources, programs, more charismatic leaders) English evangelical churches. The shortage of French-speaking evangelicals has greatly limited the evangelical churches’ influence, regardless of the strength of their outreach programs, which are, in turn, weakened by inadequate cooperation and insufficient networking and unity across churches in the region.

The various proselytizing outreach programs of the evangelicals have reached Shaïda through a number of channels. The band has thrice participated in the yearly Proclamation of the Word organized by the French evangelical churches of Moncton, and twice in the World Day of Prayer gatherings organized by the Moncton Wesleyan

Church. Through Roman Catholic get-togethers such as the World Youth Day festivities, members of Shaïda have been exposed to and have learned a number of songs issued from Evangelicalism, and a number of members have attended the Baptist-run Camp Wildwood, located in McKees Mills.

Perceptions of similarities and dissimilarities between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism vary widely among the members of Shaïda. While Nadia notes that in Roman Catholic and Baptist thought, “The essentials are not different. They believe the same thing. There are small specifications that are not the same, but I don’t think that there are problems with that” (NB-I), Jessica describes Wesleyans as people of a different *religion*. Her construction of Wesleyanism is not strictly (or principally) semantic; she illustrates her opinion by stating: “I liked that that even if they were other religions, they could sing as well. They also follow their own religion. It’s good to follow one’s own religion, to believe in something” (JG-I). Through Shaïda’s participation in various ecumenical activities, its members learn to better understand and acknowledge Protestant (especially evangelical) thought, and increasingly come to accept and appreciate their positions and their philosophical propinquities.

The Acadian culture’s continued existence in the face of English and Protestant assimilation is also partly due to the collective’s emphasis on sustaining close community and on the place of the Church in the everyday as well as in times of festivity (Christmas, Lent, Easter, the Feast of the Assumption). Acadians’ fondness of, proclivity toward and widespread observance of carnival and ritualistic excess (c.f. Lindahl 1996) has been studied extensively (Chicoine 1982; Labelle 1982; Lapierre 1992). This notion of festivity

guards against much of the direct influence of other faiths and denominations for Acadians, especially problematizing their conversion to Evangelicalism.

As discussed earlier, Acadia has not undergone the major political and social shifts as has the province of Québec, and the social situation in smaller communities remains much the same as it was in the mid-1960s, with only slightly lower levels of church attendance. Acadia has not known the same unsettling revolt against the Roman Church as Quebec has experienced through its Silent Revolution, which resulted in the de-sacralisation of the world. The Acadians of New Brunswick, as a number of other groups in Eastern Canada, have kept the practice of the sacramental approach alive, an approach which develops and nourishes faith (see Pocius 1988). For example, while the great majority of priests and most bishops in Quebec have abandoned the use of a Roman collar, the priests of Acadia still insist on being the visible signs of the institutional Church, wearing their collar even in the everyday.

Since the advent of Vatican II, “choice” for Roman Catholics is not solely a matter of religious tradition, but also a matter of liturgical form. Since the Council, the Church has experimented with a host of new liturgies and liturgical forms, including the folk Masses of the mid 1960s, the simplified vernacular Mass of the 1970s, and the High Mass in the multitudinous vernacular tongues of Roman Catholics around the world. As discussed in the previous chapter, when the youths who eventually came to form Shaïda first began organizing the various parts of the Mass, they almost exclusively borrowed from the parish choir’s repertoire, unaware of the democratic leniency of the institutional Church vis-à-vis different liturgical forms. For this reason, and for reasons of

practicality, they failed to seek out other sources for songs. When they became more comfortable with the form and function of the Mass, however, the youths began to experiment and interpret the various traditional songs in non-traditional ways, using a number of no-traditional instruments. When this went more or less unimpeded by the parishioners or the parish priest, they youths began to push the envelope, and sought out songs from other, less traditional sources. Unsuccessful at the Archdiocese library, they sought out material from *La Bonne Nouvelle*, the French Baptist Church's store.

Along with the different (more modern) sound, inherent in the evangelical music was a certain performance style. The form and sound of a number of the evangelical songs borrowed, invited the musicians as well as the assembly to sway, dance, sing and even clap hands. Although nothing was officially done to stop the youths from utilizing stage techniques, the matter was discussed at length by a number of parishioners, who purported that performance should be reserved for the stage, not for church. However, since an entire chapter will be devoted to performance, I will reserve this discussion for later.

A third different type of choice inherent in the modern Roman Catholic consciousness is the choice to be Roman Catholic at all. In his paper, "Defining Identity Through Folklore," Alan Dundes discounts Isajiw's proposed definition of identity by suggesting that since most religious groups allow for conversion, membership in various religious groups could be better categorized as voluntary associations (1983: 244). Such black-and-white demarcation can be practical, but is grossly misleading, as the range of different situations lived by members of Shaïda demonstrates. I would suggest that

membership to religious groups, denominations, and belief systems should rather be understood as both voluntary and involuntary, and as a case of varying levels not only of commitment but also of membership. While Jessica and Charles consider themselves to be Roman Catholic by culture, baptism, philosophy and choice, Nathaël and Catherine limit it to culture, baptism and choice, considering themselves so uninformed about much of the institution's philosophy and ill at ease with much of its teachings. Martin understands that his identity as a Roman Catholic was largely forced upon him by his parents' decision to get him baptized. He emphasizes the fact that his baptism was involuntary, and while he rejects the church's system of belief and the validity of the Sacraments (including his own baptism), he recognizes the authority of the Church's marking him with water as fixedly determining his membership to the institution.

Duty

The concept of duty towards the Roman Catholic Church, as understood by the members of Shaïda, is that of a responsibility felt (or not) to serve the institution's interests. The modern shift away from this type of sense of duty is obvious to the youth of Shaïda. Most of the members pointedly emphasize that their membership in the Church does not generally motivate any further sense of responsibility than that of simply being human. Catherine's answer to a query on her responsibility facing the Church is typical of the remainder of the group:

“Responsibility? I try not to have too much! Regarding the church? I don’t have the personality of being a believer who leads people. I just participate. Or more. But I’m not one who makes much noise. So I don’t know where my ‘responsibility’ would go in that. Just to participate. That would almost be my responsibility” (CL-I)

When explaining how this can be the case although they understand their participation in Shaïda’s mission in terms of bettering the liturgy, the youths unanimously lay the emphasis on their conscious choice in serving God and the community and de-emphasize their duty to the Church. Their sense of responsibility comes instead from their involvement in society.

When the emphasis is transferred from an obligation to serve to an active feeling of charity, however, the youths are quick to point out multifarious examples of what they, as youth, choose to do to serve the Church. As could be expected, this fluctuates radically from one person to the next, depending on their upbringing and personal history with the church, their exposure to other systems of thought and philosophies, their past and present involvement in and through the church, their participation in the liturgy, and their overall worldview. Jacques’ answer to an invitation to share what he believes are his responsibilities towards the Church was the most sweeping of all the members of Shaïda, including financial and material obligations, prayer, and a commitment to promote her continuance:

You give your money to the collection every day, to keep her going. You do your part anyhow. You don’t only pray for yourself, but when there’s a special Mass for a deceased parishioner, or if someone is sick, or someone is in trouble, his house burned down, well, you know, you pray for them. Or if you can offer something, whether it be a small donation of money, or a piece of clothing that you no longer wear, you know. You help your part like the Church helps to teach people. The Church is not a profit-making organization. She’s not there to make money. She’s there to serve her people. So in the same way, her people try to make her continue so that their children and the children of their children may continue to have that service anyhow.

From this and from his numerous other references to the action of the Roman Church in the world, it is clear that the young man construes the institution of the Church as an assistance-oriented organization whose purported mission is to better the material and spiritual existence of its members as well as non-members.

Amélie, who studied at a Protestant liberal arts university where anti-Catholic sentiments are prevalent, is particularly aware of the various misconceptions and damaging generalizations about the institution of the Roman Church (“molester priests and all that goes on in the news. How Catholicism is evil.” [AC – I4]), and judges that apologetics is the best solution and the most pressing need facing the church today. Amélie feels responsible for defending the Church and to make her known in the same way she knows the institution, as a mother who loves her straying children (AC-15).

Jacques, who, like most members, has been exposed to evangelicalism through Shaïda’s participation at various ecumenical conventions and events, is careful to distinguish between injunctions to believe and leading through example. Nouwen explains that individuals “sometimes have become hesitant to make [their] own religious convictions known, thereby losing [their] sense of witness” in response to what we perceive as “a very aggressive, manipulative and often degrading type of evangelization (Nouwen 1976, 92). Unlike Amélie, Jacques understands his primary duty as an advocate for the Church is not to defend or promote her verbally, but rather to function, in his interactions with Shaïda, as an example of Christian acceptance and goodwill:

By being ourselves, I would say. We’re not there preaching or teaching or dictating to people what to do, but people see what we do. They see the way we are with each other, and the way

we treat each other. And from there, they say “Oh, well. They’re all friends, they’re all comfortable, they’re all welcoming and convivial together. They can find somebody else they don’t know who’s going to go there to talk to them, they’re going to talk to them as if it was their best friend they knew for thirty years.” In that way, it’s not necessarily with words, but with our actions, that we can change them.

Rayna also feels that she is called to share her faith with others. For her, however, it is neither through defending the Roman Church nor through acting as an example of Christian uprightness. She makes it clear that the mission is to “encourage others to believe in God” (RH-I) by sharing her hope and faith, and not necessarily seeking their conversion to (or approval of) Catholicism (RH-I). Rayna’s acute awareness of the risks and difficulties of a proselytizing faith is issued mainly from her experience of and frequent encounters with the evangelicals at the geographically proximate Baptist-run *Camp Wildwood*. While her frequent participation in a number of the Camp’s many activities has guaranteed her running into theological differences, she has mainly been vexed by the common evangelical insistence on the importance of being reborn in Christ and the segregating non-believers from the “saved.” Although she has remained silent about her reservations about their forceful marketing of their beliefs, Rayna feels that while the evangelicals share much the same faith in Christ, their exclusivist theology and proselytizing methods are dubious at best.

Having also been exposed to strands of evangelicalism, mainly through her sister’s marrying a practicing Anglophone Baptist, Nadia too perceives her main responsibility to the Church in terms of the tension between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. However, Nadia is less concerned with the possible irritation caused by Protestant proselytizing of doctrine than with the possibility of conversion. She feels that Roman Catholics’ failure to attend Sunday Mass could result in their eventual conversion

to certain branches of Protestantism because of their livelier, more appealing church services. Nadia's sense of duty to attend Mass is brought about by her perception of the church as something worth saving, not because she perceives the institution as superior, but rather because it is part of her heritage: "We can't lose that!" (NB-I).

Going to Mass is by far the most commonly perceived responsibility by the members of Shaïda. While some members equate being Catholic with attendance to Mass ("I think that to be Catholic is to go to Mass at least once per week. Eating the Living Bread, drinking the Blood of Christ" [JGo-I]), the fact that Charles defines religion as being, "not just to go to Mass. It's my everyday. All the little things that I do. It's not necessarily like – to read the Bible every day, but it's more the actions. It's like how you interact with others" (CM-I), points to his being aware that for some, religion might be understood as being strictly attendance at Mass. Jérémie shares that when he was younger, "I went to church because I had to go. I thought it was a little boring, always without songs and a priest who talked in the front. Shaïda, what it did to me, is that it made me appreciate Mass like I should" (JGo-I). His use of "had to" and "should" points to his awareness that attendance is a strongly felt duty. Other members understand attendance at Mass primarily as a way to follow Christ's footsteps (JGa-I). Still others perceive weekly attendance at Mass as necessary, and as vital to Christian life as prayer (JM-I). Jonathan reports that he perceives the Mass "as if it's big, it's like really important, and you have to go" (JM-I), while Stéphane, who no longer feels forced to go by his mother, reports that going to Mass "just comes automatically. I wake up in the

morning and I go. It doesn't bother me. It's a lot of fun. It's like if I didn't go to church on Sunday morning, there would be something missing in my week" (SH-I).

Although attendance at Mass is deemed important and rewarding by all members of the band, most members would not attend were it not for their participation in it: "I only go when they need me. It's not good, because it's important to me to go to church. But sometimes I neglect it. I should go more often" (RH-I). Nathaël admits to not going to Mass outside the context of Shaïda often, and comments that his playing the drums with the group "gives me an excuse and a reason to go. So it's good" (NM-I). Martin speaks for most when he reports that "seventy-five percent of the people who are there, me included, do you really think that it's people you'd normally see going to church?" (MS-I). He explains that before he joined Shaïda, he hadn't attended Mass since he was forced to go by his mother as a child (MS-I). Other members recognize that before being members of the band, their faith was primarily seasonal in character. Nathaël reasons: "Personally, I feel kind of hypocritical just going only on Christmas. But whatever. It's like a Christmas tradition to go" (NM-I3). Nadia agrees with Nathaël, and while she has never stopped attending during the remainder of the church calendar, she does recognize the importance of the Christmas Mass: "I can't think of having Christmas without going to church. It's like it's sacred" (NB-I). The member considered by far the most outwardly religious, Charles, attends Mass daily, noting that it helps him throughout the week (CM-I).

Another commonly reported responsibility of Roman Catholics by members of Shaïda is the duty to help others. Jonathan defines his job as a Catholic as being "to pray

and to help people. Those that need help, that are poor or something like that, well to do volunteering and all that” (JM-I). Like most other members, his philosophy is action-oriented, and his understanding of “help” is also primarily tactile. Even his prayers are based on his hope in God’s intervention in a corporeal sense. Whether this is a product of the Counter-Reformation, of the Social Theology of Vatican II, or of various other currents is a difficult question. Although Jacques emphasizes the importance of corporate prayer, he makes it clear that a good Christian has a duty to act, of his own free will, to serve his fellow man *outside the context of the Church*: “It’s not necessary to go there, do your prayers every night. It’s not necessarily that. It’s touching people when I can. Not necessarily by telling them, ‘Come to church.’ It’s basically outside the church. That’s where you touch people” (MS-I).

Perhaps less convincingly articulated, a number of members of Shaïda understand their primary duty as being “not-sinning.” Stéphane posits that Roman Catholics have a duty “to treat everyone like – not the same, but like – everyone who exists on earth is a person: even if you don’t like her, you shouldn’t – you have to forgive him for what he did to you. So as a Catholic, you shouldn’t hate anyone” (SH-I). His hesitation in communicating the latter sentence (i.e. its gauche construction and the frequent changes in person) is clearly a product of his reluctance to make an exclusivist comment at the cost of theology. Jérémie reports that his responsibility as a Catholic, felt to a much lesser extent than the need to go to Mass, is to follow the 10 Commandments and “to do everything in peace. If someone else did something to you that you didn’t like, and he

apologizes and that, you forgive him. To not always drag that remorse with you the rest of your life. You forgive as you would like to be forgiven. That's it" (JGo-I).

Conformity

Once felt as a duty toward the Roman Church for all its faithful, conformity in matters of faith is now perceived as a personal choice by the majority of the young Roman Catholics of Shaïda. According to many scholars, this dissention to official church teachings is the norm across the whole of the industrialized world – not the exception (see Dillon 1999: 8). Michele Dillon explains that although the Catholic Church is a hierarchical institution with a tightly controlled power structure, the institution “constrains but does not determine how its symbols and routines are interpreted in daily life” (*ibid*: 251), making doctrine a matter of interpretation. .

The single most important reason why Roman Catholics have begun to question the authority of the institution and have lost at least some measure of the duty to conform to its form has been the deleterious effect of the propagation of injurious truths and falsehoods regarding the institution as well as its agents. The many dishonours of the past, the present-day scandals, and the negative propaganda which plague the institution and its history tarnish its image and result in a loss of confidence in it. The scandal of the pedophile priests, which began to hit headlines of national newspapers in 1985 (Carey 2004: 147), and the resultant court cases has been at the crux of the Roman Church's recent problems. The media background the problem of “rampant pedophilia” in the

Church with the much-mediated issues of the positions of the Church on abortion, homosexuality, and euthanasia.

Aside from having reservations on the authority of the Roman Church because of its failure to save face when confronted with scandal, there are two other important reasons why the youths of Shaïda feel they have a right to fail to conform. The most obvious one is of course the modern disassociation of Christ from His Church. While the prior generations were taught that the Church was to be understood primarily as the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Spirit, and the People of God, the essential image conveyed to Shaïda's generation is the Vatican II formulation of the Church as Pilgrim. As Amélie compares the Roman Church to a mother who, although imperfect and prone to be emotional, is always desperately trying to gather, teach and guide her straying children (AC-15), Mylène completely separates the institution from her agents. Not only does the image of the Pilgrim Church allow for the institution's shortfalls, but it also conveys progress and the possibility of an ultimate perfection in Christ.

The third important reason for which the band members (along with all other Roman Catholics) feel little need to conform their thinking to the hierarchy's is the strong Roman Catholic emphasis on the coupling of "faith and reason," a tradition that resists Biblical literalism and a "blind leap" approach to faith" and is distinctive to the Catholic theological tradition since at least the Middle Ages. Because this emphasis on a historically and culturally contextualized "faith and reason" results in an expectation that doctrine should "make sense" (Dillon 1999: 14-15), whenever the youths of Shaïda

disagree with a position of the Church, they are at ease debating it, question it, and if they feel it is warranted to do so, rebelling against it.

Although plagued by endless negative media attention, the Church still does enjoy a significant authority in matters of religion, ethics, and morality. Counting more than 17 percent of the world's population, the vastly complex religious community of over one billion members is served by some 4,300 bishops, 404,500 priests, 848,500 women religious, and 428,000 mission catechists, who are organized into almost 3,000 dioceses (Weigel 1999, 20). Exchanging full diplomatic representation with 166 states, the Holy See is a unique entity recognized in international law as the juridical embodiment of the universal ministry of the Bishop of Rome as the head of the Roman Catholic Church (*ibid*). Over and above its numeric clout and political pre-eminence, and in spite of much negative media attention, the Catholic Church has, during the papacy of John Paul II, further "developped [its] capacity to foster an international public moral argument in which those who do not share Catholic theological convictions can participate fully" (*ibid*: 34). George Weigel explains that "Catholicism has developped a serious theological rationale... for fostering a broad-gauged public conversation about the 'oughts' of our common life, within and among nations, amidst a wide diversity of religious, philosophical, and cultural viewpoints" (*ibid*: 35), and for this reason, "seems far more capable, today, of making genuinely public moral arguments about the right-ordering of societies and the conduct of international public life than any other world religious body" (*ibid*).

In addition to the church's important political weight and the magnitude of its adherents, the Roman Church also enjoys a significant influence through its own channels of exposure. Throughout his papacy, John Paul II adapted televangelistic strategies to pastor his own worldwide denominational family and share Roman Catholicism with others, creating the Vatican television center in 1983, and recording a CD of himself reading sacred texts while accompanied by instrumentals (Keith 2002, 124). Since 1996, the pope even has his own web page, complete with a link for the faithful to send him email (Beaudoin 2000: 18). The popularity of these resources is easily understated; in 2001, for instance, the Roman Catholic channel EWTN claimed 70 million viewers in 79 countries" (Keith 2002, 126).

Although the youth of Shaïda feel no special need to conform their thinking or actions to what the institutional church suggests as "truth," a number of them have a special attachment to the Pope as a symbol of unity, and especially to John Paul II. His "meteoric popularity among Catholics and non-Catholics alike" (Keith 2002: 124) did much to better the image of the Church. During the many interviews I conducted with the members of Shaïda, the subject of John Paul II as Pope came up often. The esteem and admiration of the youths for the Pontiff was so significant that a good number of them were moved to tears when thinking of him, some even weeping openly at the mere mention of his name. Jacques takes John Paul II as the ultimate example of valour and nobility:

Even at that time when it was just a name, Pope John Paul II, you didn't know what it meant, and you didn't care more than that, at that time. Little by little, you saw what he did anywhere, and you saw how he had difficulties at some points, with all the problems, you

know, he'd gotten shot and all that. And how he was really at the end of his breath, sometimes, and he lacked strength, but he was there anyhow, and he was there for the people anyhow. He didn't give up. I was watching it on television, when he died, and they had all those ceremonies, and you could see all the people in the streets and that. It was really powerful for me because, you know. I never knew the individual, and three quarters of the people that were there probably had never known him personally. They knew who he was, they had seen him on television, but they never knew him more than that. And you saw that there was a lot of sadness. Or joy at the same time. Both, even. It was really- you think about it, and it really touched you how one individual was able to show to all those people and to give them all those feelings without even having spoken face to face with them, or without ever having touched them. It really shows you what is the power- what are the things that only one person can do on this earth. Even if sometimes, you feel you're just one person, "I can't change anything," that's the proof that yes, with Jesus, he might not have stopped wars in the world, but he still changed the perception of people on certain things. He did many things. It's really like- He proved that he was just one person- and yes, he was on top of the ladder, if you will, because he was Pope, but I mean. Even if he was Pope, he didn't have an army at his shoulder that he ordered. He really just gave Jesus' message and he still succeeded in making impacts throughout the world. It was really- I was looking at the people on the streets who were crying, and it was very powerful (JDo-I).

Amélie, comparing the Pontiff's death to that of John Lennon, shares that she felt his passing had made her an orphan. Members of the band universally reported they mourned the passing of the beloved Pontiff.

Since decisions of the Mater et Magisteria call for "sincere assent," which is an act of judgment (Sullivan 1983: 162), approval of papal decisions, therefore, cannot be compelled. "Since assent is a cognitive process... the church hierarchy cannot rely on its formal authority alone but must provide Catholics with reasoned arguments that validate the official interpretation of the question at issue" (Dillon 1999: 15). Dillon suggests that because this is the case, Roman Catholics who fail to assent to official church teachings "should be characterized not as 'dissenting' but more accurately as 'non assenting' Catholics" (*ibid*). It is through dissent and non-assent that much of the evolution of the Church is made possible. Harvey Cox demonstrates this by taking notice of the manner in which vernacular forms of devotion come to be adopted by the hierarchy:

When reverence for Our Lady of Guadeloupe first appeared in Mexico in the sixteenth century, it was forbidden by the hierarchy. Later, though, the Guadeloupe was accepted, and then became the patroness of Mexico. Now whenever the Pope visits Mexico, her shrine is his first stop. It is hard to imagine today that Madonna's 'Like a Prayer' will one day be accepted by any church as an appropriate devotion. But stranger things have happened (Cox 2000, xi)

Through their failure to assent to the hierarchy's attempts to quell their voices and their refusal to conform their music-making to the traditional liturgical forms of the parish, the youths of Shaïda have managed to create for themselves and for whoever shares their concerns and aesthetics a space in the Mass.

Doctrine

James Beckford notes that in the present religious environment, individuals refuse to depend on positivistic, rationalistic or instrumental criteria as the sole or exclusive standard of worthwhile knowledge (1992; in Heelas 1998: 4). Willing to combine symbols from disparate frameworks of meaning, even at the cost of disjunction and eclecticism; individuals celebrate spontaneity, fragmentation, superficiality, irony and playfulness by their willingness to abandon the search for overarching or triumphalist myths, narratives or frameworks of knowledge (*ibid*). Henri Nouwen writes that present-day man "does not live with an ideology. He has shifted from the fixed and total forms of an ideology to more fluid ideological fragments" (1972: 10). These fragments of theology are, according to Howard and Streck, "less a matter of logical argument founded on biblical exegesis than an impressionist collage emerging from the raw materials of what's available in the surrounding culture" (1999: 219). Through this "pick[ing] and choos[ing]

from the diverse views on offer,” Davie argues that “the concept of God, himself or herself, becomes increasingly subjective (1999: 75). Tom Beaudoin understands the terrain in much the same manner, outlining a generation of individuals who readily adopt symbols, values, and rituals from various religious traditions and (re)combine them into their personal ‘spirituality’ (2000).

The Evangelical reflex to the decline of Christendom and the modern “bricolage” of spirituality (as Beaudoin suggests it should be called [2000: 178]) in North America has resulted in what is commonly referred to as “cultural Christianity” (c.f. Pearcey 2004). Whereas the Roman Catholic members of Shaïda demonstrate a profoundly conscious difficulty in establishing a stable, absolute personal meaning, evangelicals in the region, as elsewhere in North America, typically see the truth about existence as being clearly accessible through the words of Scripture (Guest 2002; in Lynch 2002: 36). Hunter typifies evangelicals by their “individual and experiential orientation toward spiritual salvation and religiosity in general and by the conviction of the necessity of actively attempting to proselytize all nonbelievers to the tenets of the Evangelical belief system” (1983; in Howard and Streck 1999: 55).

The concept of “relevance” has become a catch phrase and marketing strategy for a number of churches in the Moncton area in the past few years. The corporate mission statement of Allison Church, Christ’s Church, Moncton Wesleyan Church and Hillside Baptist Church all contain specific references to “relevance,” a trend increasingly evident in churches throughout the whole of North America and Europe. The “relevance” of the gospel, the “relevance” of the church, and the “relevance” of Christ himself are issues

various denominations have recently sought to substantiate and establish. The trendy subculture of Evangelicalism is the most immediately apparent instance of the importance of the concept of relevance, where plethora of books, music, films, clothing and other culture products oriented to tweens, teens and young adults defend the relevance of the church and the biblical message.

Having created their own subculture, complete with their own television and radio programs, their own music scenes, films, books, and even their own clothing and style cultures, made available in their own religious goods stores, the evangelical subculture of the region is presently served by *Blessings Christian Marketplace* and *Mission La Bonne Nouvelle* Christian Resource Centre. *Blessings* is a Canadian chain established in almost every province presently boasts 27 stores across the country, and offers online shopping. The shops have substantial and wide-ranging offerings, including everything from youth's study Bibles to heavy metal Christian music, from VeggieTales DVDs to WWJD necklaces, from purity rings to picture frames featuring Scripture verses and inspirational sayings. Neither *Blessings* nor *La Bonne Nouvelle*, however, carry specifically Roman Catholic items such as crucifixes, Holy cards, and medals. Perhaps this is because these items could be construed as offensive to their targeted audience.

Evangelicals protect themselves from "the World" by ridding their lives of what is "other" (see Lawless 1983; Titon 1980) through the Christian-produced, and Christian-oriented merchandise available at these stores. Through this "boundary strategy" (Eder *et al.* 1995: 489), evangelicals enjoy a security and certainty that nurtures their belief system until this system shifts (Walsh 1982: 2). This worldview is perplexing to the members of

Shaïda, who understand their position and mission as being firmly and rightly “in and of the World.” The subculture of the youth of Shaïda is significantly different from that of their evangelical brethren (in point of fact, the term “subculture” may not have much use here, as it implies a separation from a basic primary “culture”) and the culture of the “older generation.” Thompson, voicing the evangelical stance that today’s youth belong to “a post-Nirvana rock culture that ha[s] collectively crucified any references to absolute truth or hope” (2000: 98) does not speak for members of Shaïda, whose reaction to this quote has been to ask the following questions: Are we a rock culture? Do we really X references to truth? Or only to absolutes? Or better yet: only to peoples’ absolutes? Did we kill hope? If we did, could that be a good thing? How did we manage to work collectively when doing this? Is this type of collectivity a good thing? Are we really post-Nirvana?

Because the band has often been invited to take part in ecumenical celebrations, most members have had the opportunity to share their faith and hope with their evangelical counterparts, yet these reunions have seldom resulted in the empathic communication and spiritual union that organizers hope for when they are planned. Deeply suspicious of exclusive doctrine and absolutes, the members of Shaïda unanimously report having been recurrently shocked, scandalized or disappointed by the actions, words, and attitudes of their evangelical brethren. The major cause of scandal for the youth is their reading of the evangelicals’ belief system, a system which the youth of Shaïda consider narrow-minded and exclusivist. Theologian Henri Nouwen shares that “When Christianity is reduced to an all encompassing ideology, nuclear man is all too

prone to be sceptical about its relevance to his life experience” (1972: 12). The youths frequently share stories about these encounters, mostly relating to the intolerance of difference, poorly received ideas about specifically Roman Catholic viewpoints and prudish attitudes towards dress and sexuality.

Equating their experience of the religious xenophobia of evangelicals with the condemnatory and intolerant attitude of the “old-fashioned” Catholic Church represented by their parents and/or grandparents, the youth of Shaïda are very sensitive to matters of religious difference, and easily associate absolute or exclusive doctrine with bigotry. Although for Charles, to be a Roman Catholic “is firstly to adore the Christ and to follow... the morals of the Church that the Pope suggests to us,” for the remainder of the group, being Catholic implies primarily participation at Mass.

The members of Shaïda, in accordance with the majority of North American youth today, feel that tolerance is not only warranted but an inevitable ethical responsibility. Grace Davie remarks that “The great majority of people not only reject serious convictions for themselves but find them difficult to comprehend in others” (1999: 75). Tolerance is inevitable not primarily because it is marked as important in the present culture of respect, but rather because the youths of Shaïda generally do not ascribe much particular status to their own system. Davie underlines the fact that this tolerance of others’ beliefs can become dangerous, as it implies “a lack of conviction, a live-and-let-live capacity that becomes not only dominant but pervasive” (*ibid*).

The youths are very vocal about the importance of a broadminded toleration and respect for others' beliefs. A number of youths attribute their outlook to their concept of God, which they consider different from that proposed to and by the prior generations:

"The adults from now learned when they were younger that the church was, you know, the punishing God, and you'll be punished if you do this, and God punishes you" (MD-I).

Mylène shares her thoughts on the Church, God's Grace, and her concern with adults' attitudes toward salvation by taking the common misconceptions about the Sacrament of Reconciliation as an example:

I was taught that the Sacrament of Confession –and this was when I was in third grade– that it was, 'OK. Sorry for having done this, sorry for having done that, sorry for having done this. Oh! I'm a bad person, I'm a bad person.' But really, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, that's not what it's about at all. It's to reconcile your self with yourself, with God, with the rest of the people. That's why it's called the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And people don't see that... they sit there and want to tell the priest all they did wrong in the past year - or since they were born or whatever. That's not what it's about. Yes, you can say that if you want to, but it's really about how you feel, and how you think, and how your relation with God is *right now*. That's what it's really about... They don't see the relationship between confessing what you did wrong and admitting you're a bad person, and that God loves you. The parents, with all that they have learned, obviously, they do what they can with what they have. So they can't really [be expected to] teach something they don't know to their kids. So if they don't know about how the Church is really and about post-Vatican II and all that aspect, it's obviously more difficult to say to their children that the Church is not The Big Bad Wolf (MD-I).

Members of Shaïda unanimously insist on what they consider the essence of their faith, and what they consider should be the essence of others': a God whose love for humanity goes well beyond the common image of the severe Father vociferously intent on the punishment of His sinful creatures. Catherine shares that it is through her participation in Shaïda that she has "learn[ed] to know more the fun side and the love of God instead of the strict God" (CL-I).

Catherine's recognition and acknowledgment of a change in her perception of God, occasioned by a participation in the production of the liturgy, reveals the impact that one's understanding and one's experience of the Mass can have on belief. This fact becomes increasingly obvious with further involvement, as members share their philosophies, hopes and ideas on doctrine and the Church. Berger and Del Negro state:

...because we are usually so focused on the content of the interpretations (the joke teller's construction of gender, the singer's representation of ethnicity) we are sometimes less aware of how those contents emerge in the immediate experience of the folklore participants. And yet exactly how these interpretations are experienced is crucial for the overall meaning of the event (Berger and Del Negro 2004, 143).

Mylène's insinuation that the Church is perceived as "The Big Bad Wolf" by a number of Roman Catholics (MD-I) is echoed by most of the youths, who report having come to accept and recognize the value of the institution and its doctrines principally through their participation in the band.

The fact that the youths attach negative connotations to the word "religion" while they participate fully in their Roman Catholic faith is a testament to the distance they have taken from the institution's doctrines (and not necessarily from the institution, to which they still consider themselves meaningfully integrated). Roman Catholic theologian Henri Nouwen details a story to account for the modern disinclination towards theology and religion:

One day a young fugitive, trying to hide himself from the enemy, entered a small village. The people were kind to him and offered him a place to stay. But when the soldiers who sought the fugitive asked where he was hiding, everyone became very fearful. The soldiers threatened to burn the village and kill every man in it unless the young man was handed over to them before dawn. The people went to the minister and asked him what to do. The minister, torn between handing over the boy to the enemy or having his people killed, withdrew to his room and read his Bible, hoping to find an answer before dawn. After many hours, in the early morning his eyes fell on these words: 'It is better that one man dies than

that the whole people be lost.' Then the minister closed the Bible, called the soldiers and told them where the boy was hidden. And after the soldiers led the fugitive away to be killed, there was a feast in the village because the minister had saved the lives of the people. But the minister did not celebrate. Overcome with a deep sadness, he remained in his room. That night an angel came to him, and asked, 'What have you done?' He said: 'I handed over the fugitive to the enemy.' Then the angel said: 'But don't you know that you have handed over the Messiah?' 'How could I know?' the minister replied anxiously. Then the angel said: 'If, instead of reading your Bible, you had visited this young man just once and looked into his eyes, you would have known' (Nouwen 1990).

Living faith directly is put at a premium by the members of Shaïda. Catherine explains that in her everyday, she tries to "*live religion*." She continues:

I try to put the church building and just the Hail Mary prayers, the Our Father- I try to, each person I meet at work, for example, I tell myself like 'OK. God, help me. So that I can give the best of myself so that I can help that person.' For me, it's more like that, actions like that. It's not- I mean- I'm not saying that I don't get up [in the morning] and I can say the Our Father, that I don't got to bed and say an Our Father. When I think about it, I say it. But it's more [just] like that. It's not necessarily when I panic, but that's where it flashes more. Or if it's going really well. If it's going well, I say 'Thank you.' But it's the middle. That's where I forget more (CL-1).

Although the youths report an increased appreciation of the worth and significance of the Roman Church's doctrines resulting from their participation, they variously oppose the Church's stance on issues such as homosexuality, the ordination of women, and the role of the laity in the context of the Mass, and do so openly. While these positions – along with ideas such as the existence and nature of Heaven and Hell the value and consequence of the Sacraments, and the importance of a Sunday Obligation Mass to the believer – are considered to be in the realm of the debatable, other doctrines of the Church are by and large considered the purview of the institution by the youths. These other doctrines include, for most members of Shaïda, the right to abortion, the right to euthanasia, the special powers of the priest, the sacredness of the church building, and Mosaic Law.

Michele Dillon, writing on non-assenting minorities' struggles with doctrine within the confines of the Roman Church, states that these Catholics "compartmentalize the teaching of the church hierarchy from participation in the doctrinal and communal tradition" (1999: 8). This compartmentalization, far from being limited to a device used only by contesting minorities, as Dillon suggests, is the factor that allows the youth of Shaïda (by and large representative of, and also part of, the empowered majority), along with most other Roman Catholics, to consider themselves part of the Institutional Church while being at variance with some of its positions. Dillon explains that this contestation of official church teaching by Catholics "reflects their appreciation for the fact that doctrine is, in part, a social construct contingent on the specific historical, cultural, and institutional contexts in which it emerges" (*ibid*: 9). This understanding of the nature of church doctrine is what allows the youths of Shaïda to question, doubt, discount and even oppose the Roman Church's positions while nonetheless more or less firmly signifying their Catholicism.

The Roman Catholic Church itself has lately had to face the issue of its own relevance, and the relevance of its doctrine. A testament to this is the unanimous equating by the members of Shaïda of "doctrine" with insensitive and prejudiced dogma, and their tendency to see their spirituality as being far removed from "religion," which they associate with the institution of the church, a movement common to their generation (Beaudoin 2000: 25). Popular culture is well aware of the Roman Church's movement toward relevance, as is mordantly displayed in Kevin Smith's film, *DOGMA*, where

George Carlin portrays a cardinal who, in his “Catholicism Wow!” campaign, substitutes the crucifix with Buddy Christ in an attempt to make the faith more germane.

The youths of Shaïda have been in direct contact with this trend toward relevance through their participation in the World Youth Day pilgrimages in Toronto and Köln (the Roman Catholic Church’s response to create an opportunity for young Catholics to see the church as strong and relevant today). The youths have also experienced the Roman Church’s movement toward relevancy through the Alpha Courses,¹⁵ Trilogy courses, and in the modern inclination of parish priests to present the gospel message in contexts applicable to present situations.¹⁶

Perhaps even more telling of the modern trend to make religion relevant is how it is employed by the members of Shaïda themselves, demonstrating that relevance is also important to them. Firstly, there is the manner in which they communicate their beliefs to each other. Religious ideas and ideals are commonly presented via expressions, catch phrases and images borrowed from popular culture sources, generally from satirical animated series like *The Simpsons*, *The Family Guy*, *American Dad*, and *Futurama*. Gordon Lynch explains that this is possible because we engage actively with popular culture (2002: 65). Although it is common for youths to make reference to popular culture

¹⁵ Nicky Gumbel’s Alpha Course is an “ecumenical” introductory course to Christianity; the title of the first instalment of the 15-video course is particularly relevant to the present discussion: “Christianity: Boring, Untrue, Irrelevant?” This course was offered thrice in the Holy Family Parish Unity, twice scheduled purposefully immediately following Shaïda’s rehearsals.

¹⁶ This last practice has always been encouraged by the hierarchy, but with reservation: “a good liturgy has to reflect the experience of the community, or, to use a current expression, it must be relevant. Relevance, however, should be subjected to certain conditions. The liturgy is not a forum for the propagation of the social and political ideologies, however Christian these may be in orientation” (Chupungco 1982: 65).

in everyday life (see, for example Dimitriadis 2001), there is a genuine apprehension, a malaise, even, amongst the youth of Shaïda to discuss religion and faith without the protection afforded from using the voice of these “third parties.” The manner of communication of the youth will be more closely examined later (Chapter 7). Secondly, as will also be considered later (Chapter 4), many of Shaïda’s members understand their primary mission as a band as being to make the Mass more relevant to the youth of the community. Most importantly, however, is the role experience plays in their religious thought and practice.

Experience

If Postmodernity results in a general “incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard 1984; in Lynch 2002: 31), it is clear that the equality-cum-diversity philosophy of Postmodernity is pitted against “the dedifferentiating processes of modernity (associated with trends towards totalizing universals)” (Heelas 1998: 8). The “postmodern dedifferentiating processes,” which encourage the view that cultural products are of equal potential value, is in direct opposition to the differentiating processes of modernity, which establish value and truth boundaries” (ibid). In a culture “in which capitalism provides the fixed foundation of social organization whilst the meaning of life in a personal level is in flux” (Lynch 2002: 32), the new “hesitation to affirm religious orthodoxies, a newly slippery reading of Scripture in cyberspace, instabilities of space and time, deep uncertainties about the self and gender, and the role that faith (supposedly a certainty)

plays amid so many ambiguities” (Beaudoin 2000: 178) result in a sense of general disconnection from traditional meaning (Lynch 2002: 92). A full fifty-eight percent of the American population today consider themselves “sceptical” (Barna 2000) while notional Christians (individuals who describe themselves as Christian yet reject that eternal life is granted them because of their reliance upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the grace extended to people through a relationship with Christ) represent 39% of the American population (Barna 2005).

The “historical dislocation” (Nouwen 1972: 8) we are experiencing, this coupure in the sense of connection “with the vital and nourishing symbol of their cultural tradition; symbols revolving around family, idea systems, religion, and the life cycle in general” (ibid), results in a tendency to “insert a large question mark after any religious idea, doctrine, or assumption that our elders have taken to be theologically certain or that they approach with reverence” (Beaudoin 2000: 179). Nouwen points out that the problem of scepticism in the context of Christendom is exacerbated by the fact that most Christian preaching fails to recognize the break in our historical consciousness. While modern society in the West has abandoned hope for the future (a fact attested to by the widespread manifestation of Apocalypticism) and lost faith in histories, Christian preaching is often still “based on the presupposition that man sees himself as meaningfully integrated with a history in which God came to us in the past, is living under us in the present, and will come to liberate us in the future” (1972: 9). Nouwen unceremoniously explains that when this happens, “the whole Christian message seems like a lecture about the great pioneers to a boy on an acid trip” (ibid).

For the youths of Shaïda, the question of whether they are sceptical or rather cynical, or whether they are incredulous or simply hesitant is nonsensical. When framed so as to qualify their concepts of the institutional Church, governments, or absolutes, the youths universally agree that they could be considered to be all of the above. However, when this same question is framed in such a way that it pays heed to their various experiences, the query takes on a whole new significance. If the modern disengagement from traditional sources of meaning and the associated suspicion of traditional sources of authority have resulted not only in the lack of a sense of meaning, but also in a significant interest in its pursuit (Lynch 2002: 21), the modern thirst for the “moment, [the] point or [the] center... in which the distinction between life and death can be transcended and in which a deep connection with all of nature, as well as with all of history, can be experienced” (Nouwen 1972, 16) is a great deal amplified. In the surrounding culture, the increasing number of centers for meditation, reflection and contemplation, and the many new Zen, Tai Chi and Yoga clinics are a testament to the modern inclination to search for meaning and purpose.

The generation of youth that Shaïda represents is the age group most thought to be actively searching for meaning in life (44% of Baby Busters compared to 32% of all others are searching for their purpose in life) (Barna 2001). This search is carried out mainly through the ceaseless hunt for experiences which will allow them to find answers, test their limits, and feel life itself. Tara Brabazon quotes Tyler Durden from *Fight Club* to underscore the importance of experience to youths’ evaluation of their beliefs: “How much do you know about yourself if you’ve never been in a fight?” (Brabazon 2005:

186). The youth of Shaïda seek and encourage each other to seek the experience of the Holy in a wide variety of ways. The experience of the Holy is invariably first sought through the experience of the Mass, which is widely understood by them as being the celebration of the Salvation of Mankind through the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross (more on this later). For most members of the band, the Mass is an excellent way to come in contact with God and experience His presence. Jérémie shares that for him, practicing his Roman Catholic faith through celebrating Mass is not only what he was taught to do but also “what I believe in with all my heart. It’s a way of nourishing my soul, my spirit, if you will” (JGo-I).

When considering the youths’ participation in the Mass in the context of Shaïda, the youths report that the liturgy is made much more effective for them through their music making. Joelle explains that she likes to sing with Shaïda during the Mass because it allows her

To be in a milieu where you have a certain contact. Not contact; a certain relationship with something that’s up there. We don’t know what. And with all that environment. On yourself as well. It makes you come back to yourself as well, it allows you to reflect. When you sing, you feel there’s something. Without necessarily knowing exactly what it is (JDu-I).

Giving her reasons for having joined the group, Jessica shares that, “I really like that when I sing, it touches me – in my heart” (JGa-I). Charles believes he speaks for all members when he shares that “every one [of the members of Shaïda] has a thirst.” He reasons that members’ performance in the Mass generates positive fruits and helps satisfy this thirst for the transcendence, which is attested by the fact that members persevere with the band regardless of the difficulties and sacrifices of membership: “There’s something it

brings us, because if we didn't have a thirst, we wouldn't keep coming" (CM-I). Martin reasons that the purpose of religion and of every religious endeavour is inner peace:

It's to feel well about themselves and to learn how to love ourselves and to learn how to love others as well. Because you can't really love others if you don't love yourself. If you notice everyone that's, you know, a big 'fuck you' to everybody and that, well, most of the time, that person doesn't love herself. When you have inner peace and you love yourself, it's much easier to love others and respect others and to do nice things and all that" (MS-I).

Through Shaïda, Charles relates that "I learned to know myself, and I learned to live. I lived, but not a lot, I think. Of what I can remember. And it showed me how youths can live and how we should live" (CM-I). Catherine explains that for her and for a number of others, the group functions as an exemplar of human harmony, and allows those who come in contact with the group the opportunity to experience a meaningful and energetic fellowship: "You're used to a routine, and all of a sudden you've forgotten what it is to be happy, and to see something else than you see every day, and you get there and it's like all blasted and peppy. It's a good slap in the face. It gives you- it allows you to tune yourself" (CL-I).

In addition to the experience of the transcendent brought about through music-making in the context of the Mass, the communication of this experience with others is a key element of the youths' experience. For Jacques, the sharing of stories and values is a vital part of involvement in the band: "Everyone has their beliefs, and their values and it's almost like being part of a group that you know have the same values as you. You can go to Mass or the World Youth Day or you can hold meetings, you can pray together, you can share stories" (JDo-I). This sharing of values and stories need not be verbal, and as will be examined in a later chapter (Chapter 7), is seldom done overtly. The

communication of one's faith, it is clear to most members, is not necessarily done verbally. Catherine explains: "every time we practice, and when we play at Mass, it makes me smile more, and sometimes it makes my faith come out more, without necessarily saying something" (CL-I).

The youths' experience of inner peace which results from fellowship, community, and contact with the transcendent in the context of the Mass is amplified by their ministering to the community. If ministry is to be understood as meaning "the ongoing attempt to put one's own search for God, with all the moments of pain and joy, despair and hope, at the disposal of those who want to join this search but do not know how" (Nouwen 1971, 111), it is clear that the youth of Shaïda minister to one another as well as to the community. Music-making, Charles highlights, "helps me communicate what I'm living. I have a hard time communicating what I'm living sometimes, but through song, it's the best way of communicating myself, and prayer as well" (CM-I). This communication's first purpose is to create a sense of community. The experience of community is considered by some members to be as important to the proper functioning of Shaïda as their experience of God through participation.

Although the Mass is by far the most commonly reported vehicle for the experience of the transcendent, the youth feel it belongs to their everyday reality; chiefly for this reason, though they may feel that they indeed meet God through its celebration, it is seldom reported as being the trigger for the highest order of the experience of the Holy. Special days, retreats, pilgrimages and paranormal / supernatural occurrences and inspirations are often given as chief examples. By far the most universally reported cause

for an encounter with the transcendent by the youths of Shaïda is time spent with the Marie-Jeunesse religious family, based in Sherbrooke, Quebec. This religious community's strong emphasis on the mystical, its pre-Vatican II emphases on the Sacral and the Holy, and its ultraconservative, ultramontane theology set it apart from the everyday reality of the youths. Strongly accentuating the benefits of contemplation and mysticism, the theology of the Marie-Jeunesse religious community reflects Roman Catholic theologian Thomas Merton's philosophy that the encounter with the Transcendent is facilitated through the mystical devotions of the Church's tradition:

Why do we think of infused contemplation, mystical prayer, as something essentially strange and esoteric, reserved for a small class of almost unnatural beings and prohibited to anyone else? Infused contemplation is... intimately connected with the pure and perfect love of God which is God's greatest gift to the soul. Therefore, is anyone should ask: 'Who may desire this gift and pray for it?' - the answer is obvious: everybody (1963; in Pratt 2003: 22).

Referring to Marie-Jeunesse's approach and method, Jacques voices that "It was not the same type of thing you [normally] saw in a church" (JDo-I). The religious community's mystical approach, coupled with the geographic distance which separates it from Shaïda's members serves to frame the group and encounters with its members as "special," effectively separating these from the ordinariness of the everyday.

Some members, like Nadia, have had the occasion to come in contact with the Marie-Jeunesse religious community on a number of occasions. Having first met Marie-Jeunesse in Grand Falls, in Northern New Brunswick during a mini-council they had made possible, Amélie remembers her first impression of the group as being astonishing. She explains: "it was like: [makes a stunned face]. It was incredible. 'Oh my God!' I felt I had converted myself. I felt as if I had an epiphany or something" (AC-I4). The Marie-

Jeunesse religious community motivated at least two of the present members of Shaïda to join the band; while Jacques intimates that his first encounter with Marie-Jeunesse, occasioned through an activity organized by Shaïda, became the reason he joined, for Charles, it was a year-long involvement in the life of the Marie-Jeunesse community that brought him to become interested in joining Shaïda.

Marie-Jeunesse has given the opportunity for the youths to communicate their faith. Because of the separateness of the religious community from the everyday lives of the youths, this allowed them to voice their thoughts, feelings, hopes and qualms about faith, the Church, and God (NB-I). Moreover, the band's normal denial of the strictly "religious" in its everyday reunions is suspended when the Marie-Jeunesse community takes part in their gatherings. This has resulted in the religious community's serving to initiate a number of members in some vernacular devotions of the Roman Church in Canada, including, to various degrees, meditative prayer, the recitation of the rosary, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the veneration of Mary, and the use of icons, medals, and holy cards. It is clear for Nadia that her traditional religious practice, which includes the use of religious objects, reciting the rosary and meditative prayers, is not issued from her participation in Shaïda but rather from her upbringing and her contact with Marie-Jeunesse. She explains: "We don't talk about rosaries in Shaïda, and we don't necessarily talk about the Catholic religion. We talk about the Word of God and we talk about the Love of God, and you know, the Message of God. Well. We don't link that to prayer too much either" (NB-I).

The World Youth Day pilgrimage in Toronto was a turning point in the religious practice of a number of the members of Shaïda. Lina, who first came in contact with the band and its members through a World Youth Day meeting, relates that the pilgrimage “helped me realize what was God and what that meant in my life” (LR-I). Upon her return from the pilgrimage, she joined Shaïda, which became for her “a base that held me up. My spirit remained strong, and my faith was upheld by that base” (LR-I). Nathaël, who was peer-pressured into joining Shaïda, was also coerced, through relentless persistence from the adult organizers as well as from the many friends who intended to get involved, to attend the first of the preparatory meetings for the pilgrimage. An oft-related story about Nathaël’s comments during this first meeting is re-told by Mylène, more than two years later:

he was coming to the World Youth Days because me and you and Amélie were coming, and it was going to be fun. And then he said, ‘I’m going to the World Youth Days because you said it had changed your lives in Toronto, and I don’t believe you. I have to go see for myself.’ He said that to the group (MD-I).

Nathaël’s reference to Thomas’ (his) incredulity aside, his reference to how he understood the pilgrimage had changed the lives of some of the band members reveals how the pilgrimage was promoted to him.

The World Youth Day pilgrimages in Toronto (2002) and Köln (2005) were understood by the youth to represent excellent ways in which they could experience both the corporate Church and the Holy. Although reasons for participating varied, Amélie believes she speaks for the majority when she shares that

most people who were going, especially people from here [were] look[ing] for something more. You’re always looking for something more. Especially when you’re young. You

always want more. And I think it was like: there was this experience that had been offered to me, to go to Toronto with a gang of youths my age. People who I thought were a lot of fun. To go see the Pope. And I knew it was going to be an incredible experience. Unforgettable. It was as well (AC – I4).

Although she stresses that her choosing to participate was triggered primarily by her curiosity and her desire to live the experience, and underscores that it was not in the hope of being “converted” (in the sense of undergoing a rebirth), Amélie acknowledges that the event induced in her a religious “high.”

Because of his active participation in Shaïda, his popularity among the youth and his family background, Jérémie was one of the first recruited to take part in the World Youth Day pilgrimage in Toronto. A number of youth, including Jérémie himself, have commented on the impact the pilgrimage has had on him and on his faith. He shares:

Shaïda deepened my beliefs. Because of Shaïda, I chose to undertake and participate in the World Youth Day in Toronto. And because of that, I chose to participate in the World Youth Days in Germany. I don't know. Those were two unforgettable experiences. It was incredible. You know, all the stuff people say about that. You can't- Even with what they say, you can't imagine it until you live it. That's it. I hope to go to those in Australia (JGo-I)

Unable to attend the World Youth Day in Toronto, Charles shares that this is likely what made him realize the import of his Roman Catholic faith. Because he felt so disconcerted about not being present at the gathering of youths, he realized how deeply he yearned for a faith more intensely lived out (CM-I).

Although unforgettable experiences for all involved, the World Youth Day pilgrimages were not necessarily entirely positive for all. Joelle, who traveled to Köln hoping to experience the intensity of spiritual union with the transcendent, was disappointed. Although, as she explains, “there were really [good] moments. When we were in groups, there was the energy we formed. I think that. And there was the vigil

[when] we saw the Pope, the walk was really – it was THE moment” (JDu-I), she was disappointed when the final vigil and following Mass were anticlimactic. Unable to pinpoint the reason for which she was incapable of “feeling” the Pontiff’s Mass, which was expected to be the culmination of the pilgrimage, she explains that “the night as such, I don’t know. There was something missing” (JDu-I). Although she is the only one to have been vocal about how the pilgrimages disturbed her faith, Catherine is certainly not the only member of the band who was upset by the festivities. The numerous heated confrontations with other young Catholics over space, food, and water, although expected in congregations numbering in the hundreds of thousands, especially when considering the lack of sleep, stress, and high expectations. No matter how predictable the results, however, these failures to considerate others and these lacks of understanding are difficult to accept in the context of a peace festival for Christ.

In accordance with most other members of Shaïda, Amélie considers being fulfilled the more important thing in her life. Although she falls short of it, she searches fulfillment, “that’s what I’m seeking. And that’s why I’m not in school right now. It wasn’t fulfilling. I’m waiting to find that” (AC-I4). She explains that through letting the Spirit lead her life, she trusts that she will ultimately come to be fulfilled, “I go with the wind, and wherever it bring me, well- There are always decisions that I can control where I’m going, but I trust that where I’m supposed to be is where I am right now. It’s a pain” (AC – I4). Through her frequenting the Marie-Jeunesse religious family, her participation in the World Youth Day celebrations, and her involvement with Shaïda, Amélie felt satisfied, but explains that “It’s a high that lasts only so long. I noticed that you really

have to work in order to keep it. And then, I don't know" (AC-I4). Comparing this high to that of an addictive drug, she explains that one cannot maintain it perpetually: "You always need more" (AC – I4). Joelle voices it differently, clarify that each of these different experiences "opens the doors wider," but while it allows her to ponder about the nature of life, it doesn't answer her questions (JDu-I).

Personal Authenticity

The youth members of Shaïda identify the "authenticity" of the group as both its essence and its reason for being able to attract wide numbers of participants and supporter supporters. This authenticity is perceived as rooted in the fact that the youths feel that they need not put on masks or pretend to be other than they are in order to serve their function. The sense of fraternity felt in the context of participation allows members to "be themselves."

In the context of performance, communicative competence rests primarily on members' knowledge and understanding of the Roman Catholic Mass (see Chapter 7). In the context of inter-group interaction, however, communicative competence is largely regulated by how members use and manipulate popular culture in personally authentic ways. For example, when Nathaël referred to the exaggerated *ritardando* at the end of *Baruch-Attah* as "feeling like Sideshow Bob stepping on the rakes," an expression taken from a seemingly interminable scene in *The Simpsons*, he was countered by Amélie, who

held her knee in mock agony while sounding out the Family Guy's Peter Griffin's "Uffft!...aaahhh! Uffft!...aaahhh!"

This reference to popular culture functions firstly to link Shaïda's actual performance to popular culture. This same *ritardando* also allowed the youths to open a dialogue about sin, human nature and the moral difficulty of living "the good life" when Amélie satirically commented that it could be understood as an allegory of the parishioner's life. Having received the Eucharist and having been absolved of their minor sins, she explained that we merrily are sent forth into the world. Once outside the church, however, the long *ritardando* at the end of the song symbolizes our almost-immediate "boggling down" caused by the stresses of life and God's absence – up until the next Sunday. It is through this type of speech performance that the faith of the youth is shared among themselves; popular culture is used to communicate belief, ideas about religion, as well as their philosophies on life.

Religious ideas and ideals are commonly presented via expressions, catch phrases and images borrowed from popular culture sources, generally from satirical animated series like *The Simpsons*, *The Family Guy*, *American Dad*, and *Futurama*. Although it is common for youths to make reference to popular culture in everyday life, there is a genuine apprehension amongst the youth of Shaïda to discuss religion and faith without the protection afforded from using the voice of these "third parties." Gordon Lynch explains that this is possible because we engage actively with popular culture (Lynch 2002: 65). The predilection of the members of Shaïda to discuss religion through cartoon characters is most assuredly due, at least in part, to a great number of the members' re-

initiation to Roman Catholicism and the Church through these media. In 2001, in preparation for the upcoming World Youth Day in Toronto, a series of introductions to Catholic thought were organized by a number of youths (including myself), each one consisting of the visioning of an episode from *The Simpsons* followed by a guided discussion of Roman Catholic theology. Throughout the Alpha Course which was organized immediately following the meetings on *The Simpsons* as well as the Trilogy courses offered erratically over the course of the past five years, Bart, Homer, Ned, and God (the Simpsons' God) were constantly quoted in a surprisingly successful attempt at linking pure theology to everyday life through the lens of popular culture.

Although, as Tom Beaudoin maintains, "pop culture does not respect the boundaries of tradition or religious dogma" (Beaudoin 2000: 178), it does have an uncanny ability to facilitate their communication. The Roman Church hierarchy in Canada has lately demonstrated that it too, is aware of the youths' ability to better communicate through popular culture and art. The Canadian Conference of Bishops' manual for the preparation of the World Youth Day pilgrimage in Toronto (2002), which was distributed to youths from most participating dioceses around the world, encouraged participants to watch feature films such as "Magnolia," and hold discussions on the maker's intentions and philosophy.

Gordon Lynch's understanding of our use of popular culture may be a key reason why institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church condone and sometimes even promote its use in the dissemination of doctrine and dogma: Although Lyon warns that "once the text is out in the open, it is extended by others' interpretations, spiralling

endlessly beyond all efforts to tether the text to truth or to fix its meaning in place” (Lyon 1994: 18; in Lynch 2002: 65), Gordon Lynch asserts that “the way in which we interpret or ‘read’ it will be shaped as much (if not more) by the interests, taste, beliefs, and commitments that we already have than by anything that is in the popular cultural ‘text’ itself” (Lynch 2002: 65). In this sense, Lynch heralds the simultaneous death of every author (see Barthes 1977).

Thérèse Smith, referencing Paul Tillich, reasons that if “‘religion as ultimate concern is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expresses itself’ (Tillich 1963, 3:42), it is not possible to understand one without the other. Critically, the point of juncture or overlap of both, should be one of the richest sources (if not the richest source) of meaning” (Smith 2004, 5). When we understand religious meaning as inseparable from culture we must also recognize the religious significance of the later. Tom Beaudoin writes that it is through popular culture that members of the present generation “attempt to make sense of life and to express their deeper religious sentiments” (Beaudoin 1998: 21; in Lynch 2002:54). Beaudoin even goes so far as to state that in this way, popular culture “has thus become the ‘surrogate clergy’” (Beaudoin 1998: 21).

CHAPTER 4: MISSION AND MOTIVATION

When I began enquiring about what the various participants believed was the mission of Shaïda, I quickly realized that there were almost as many different views on it than members involved in the project. The largest difference, as could be expected, is between the objectives of the younger members and that of the adults. However, these differences are far from being what one would expect, as is examined in this chapter.

Shaïda's Mission According to Adult Organizers

The first of the objectives suggested by the adult organizers of the group is that of making the members of Shaïda feel a sense of *Communitas* with each other, with the Universal Church, with their parish church, and their community. For Donia, who initiated the creation of the Académie Shaïda (see Chapter 1) as an evangelization project, Shaïda “gives them a place to fraternize, to come together, where they are welcomed in what they’re living, for who they are, without being judged, without being – that’s it: judged” (DD-I). The adults endeavoured to smooth the rough edges between the community and the youths through the creation of a special youth-friendly space (as discussed in Chapter 1), which was judged vital for the functioning of the project. The creation of this youth space is judged to have been successful in achieving the desired goals. Donia shares: “The objectives aimed for really have been accomplished. I no

longer question that and I say: ‘Yes. It works!’” Considering the progress she perceived in the youths, she explains:

when I listen to witnesses like Amélie gives, or you know, the little Jessica Fraser, or- you know, the people that are involved, you know. When I see Martin Saulnier come with his smile now, and looking at us in the eyes, and you know, Nathaël, who keeps coming, and Jacques and Denis, and I see the fraternity between them, and I see how they want to give it to others- we can’t doubt anymore (DD-12).

According to Adrien, the sense of fraternity created by the project is by far its most important consequence.

As discussed in a previous chapter (Chapter 1), however, the facilitating of the creation of a relaxed fraternal space was not self-serving, but rather was perceived as a way of helping the youths to evangelize themselves and each other. Adrien shares: “It brings [the youth of Shaïda] to church, and it requires them to pray a little more, and be more themselves” (AD-I). As Adrien intimates, the organizers of the project judge that learning to be oneself amongst peers, praying (both communally and privately) and attending Mass inevitably lead to a stronger sense of self, which predictably results in a more passionate and committed faith. In an article published for *Aine(e)s en Marche* (2001), Marie Collette-Bourque wrote that the goal of the activity was

to make community with the youths who didn’t feel attracted to the participation of the mission of the church, even if the practicing toll with the youth is evaluated at more than 60%. Therefore, it is to prepare the relief in an aging church that is in constant reduction of religious effectives (Bourque 2001).

The creation of Shaïda was a response to the lack of spaces where youths could form community and evangelize each other. Referring to the parish’s emphasis on Catechesis programs and its (almost) complete neglect of the needs of teenagers and young adults, Adrien argues that “in the church today, they think catechesis [for young children] has a

lot more importance than teenagers. They do a lot for catechesis; there is a huge organization for catechesis. But when it comes to teenagers,” he explains, “We abandon them there. They don’t want to do anything” (AD [MD-I]).

Shaïda is intended to do much more than help its members; its mission also extends to helping the other youths of the parish. “Shaïda is a way to reach other youths,” Alvin explains, “to [help them] see the church as something that’s OK.” Alvin explains that the group does this by demonstrating that there is “another way to pray than the way we’re used to.” He continues:

Many youths wouldn’t come to church, period, if it wasn’t through Shaïda. It could be an opening for them to come. Otherwise, they wouldn’t come. But from the fact that they say ‘Ah, Shaïda’s playing, we’ll go.’ It gives them an opening to come back to the church, and after that, maybe keep coming to church (AM-I)

Though it is clear that the group’s primary allegiance is to the younger members of the parish, Alvin sees Shaïda’s playing more as creating an opportunity for the evangelization of the parents of the children who ask to be brought to Shaïda’s Masses (AM-I). The older parishioners are also perceived as important targets, and are considered as part of the primary audience by a number of members. Jérémie explains that “youth, that’s everyone who likes the music we play. You know, it can be an old woman in her eighties who likes youth music. If she enjoys that, and it makes her come to Mass more often” (JGo-I).

When Shaïda performed at the funeral of four teenagers who died in an automobile accident involving a drunk driver in the summer of 2004, Donia realized that the band’s function was no longer only to make Mass more interesting or appealing to the youths, as

its organizers once believed was the aim of its youth members, but rather as a ministry in the proper sense of helping to celebrate. She shares that after the funeral, band members reported understanding, for the first time, “that what they were doing was important, to celebrate in community” (DD-I). “Shaïda’s ministry,” She relates,

is to help celebrate. That’s the word I’m going to use because that’s what it is. At Mass, you lead the song. The ministry you play there is the song, the praise. It’s to make the assembly live a little more their prayer. It’s another way to pray. And I think it really helps the people that are there to internalize what is going on during a Eucharistic Celebration (DD-I2).

Before, during, and after the funeral of these youths, the members of Shaïda commissioned each other to lend support to those in mourning, and this, in spite of the quantity of members who had been close friends with the four deceased.

So as to assure to correct functioning of the group and ensure that the band rightly fulfill its mission, the adult organizers work together to make the youths feel at ease. Donia understands her role in the project as a support for Adrien in the background and as a support for the youths in the forefront: “I greet them, I listen to them, I love them” (DD-I2). For Alvin and Adrien, the job is much more hands-on. The two men perceive their duty as being to guide the youths’ efforts while they act as their booking agents, promoters, public relations people and musical directors.

Members’ Ideas About the Group’s Mission

The youths have a very different idea about how and why the group serves those involved in it, as well as those who come in contact with it. They also have very different

ideas about how and why the adult organizers are motivated to help them. The most common reason given by the members to explain why their leaders would take the time to help them prepare for and perform at Mass is that they simply wish to make them happy. “It’s for our P’tit Bonheur,” Amélie explains (AC-I). Jessica is of the same opinion: “I think he just really like youths.” She explains by recounting how she reconnected with Shaïda after an absence: “There was once, I hadn’t gone in a long time... When he saw me he was like: ‘Oh! I haven’t seen you in a long time!’ and he was very convivial and all that. I think he really loves to see youths believe in Jesus” (JGa-I). Catherine, who has been a member of the band long enough to know that Adrien is less motivated by the desire to evangelize youths than the hope that they may live happier, explains that he makes himself available in order “to help the youths... To make them know life more” (CM-I). Jacques explains:

He was in music when he was younger. Even if he doesn’t play in the choir as such, he prays with us anyhow. He likes it when he tries to make us do something beautiful together. If it works, well he’s happy, and if it doesn’t work, well, it’ll work next time. He’s always supporting (JDo-I).

Martin is more explicit:

[When Adrien] brings youths in there, it’s not necessarily to follow all the rules, it’s to go there, and we’re there, we respect each other, and you know. It’s beautiful when we’re together. Because we respect each other. Because we’re there and we learn to meet other people at the same time. The church is a lot of that. Right now, that’s what it is. When a youth arrives- When a youth see us in church, and gets there, he meets a lot of new people, and a lot of people who accept him, and in a way, that’s Shaïda’s mission. To bring youths... there so you meet other people who are looking for peace inside themselves and to love himself, herself, and to find the same thing in others (MS-I).

Another frequently reported reason why the adult organizers would choose to help the youths is their hope to attract others. Martin describes why he believes Adrien is involved:

He tries to restart a new generation to take over. Basically, that's what he's doing, in a way. He's like: 'Look. The road's there for you guys. Take it. It's you, later, that are going to take this over.' He makes himself a mission with that. He's there in a way for a mission. And at the same time, he likes music, and he really loves the church, so he does three things in one, in a way. Music, he tries to bring as many people for the future because he want the church and all that to continues, and he's really spiritual (MS-I).

"Maybe he feels old or something and wants someone to take over," Amélie shares (AC-I). While Catherine posits that it is simply "To make Mass fun" (CL-I), Stéphane understands that their motivation also comes from their longing "to see that youths are interested in singing for the Christ." He explains: "It would motivate *me* a lot to see there are youths that want to sing for the Christ" (SH-I). For Jacques, Adrien's involvement is pressing:

he's part of the last generation. He likes to see that the new generations continue going to church and continue to believe and to pray in Jesus. To hope to you or me or someone of the group, maybe, in our generation, when we'll be 50-60, we'll do the same thing (JDo-I).

Jonathan likewise thinks Adrien is motivated rather by apologetics: "To interest people more in believing in Jesus and to say he's really there. That it's not a science fiction thing that happened, and whatever. To make people believe in Jesus and all that. So we'd talk about it to other youths" (JM-I), while Rayna guesses that "he probably grew up in a religious family, and he wants to continue that." (RH-I) Nadia puts it succinctly: "They do that for God. And at the same time... they also want to bring to youths to believe in God. [And] to have a purpose" (NB-I).

The members of the band also believe the organizers involve themselves in the project because of their desire to make the community happy. Relating to Adrien, Catherine explains that "he's of the type who always wants to help the people who have most difficulty. So when we're there singing our songs, want it or not, it helps people. It

makes a difference even if we don't see it" (CL-I). Amélie agrees: "I think it makes him happy that we have such an effect on people. To show them that it's alright, praying, it's alright being young and believing and having faith" (AC-I). Rayna is also in accordance: "To encourage people and share the faith, and to just help people. That's really what it is, and he does a good job. I know people that- well, because of Shaïda, it helped them" (RH-I).

Although the main focus of the organizers has much been altered over the years, the Musical Ensemble's members have not always been kept at pace. Members will often join without being formally introduced to the group's mission or reason for being, and will often be unaware that the organization does have specified objectives other than those immediately obvious. For the youths forming the band, they do not perceive themselves as the principal focus of the experiment; Shaïda's ministry towards the community is their chief concern. Nonetheless, Shaïda's mission is much clearer to the youth members of the band than to their adult counterparts.

First and foremost in the great majority of the participants' minds is simply of "reaching youth in church" (AC-I). In the wake of the Second Vatican Council, a host of choral groups, theatre troops, musical ensembles, dance companies, orchestras and the like emerged, whose main function, many understood, was to make Sunday mornings less morose and monotonous. Scores of new music were written for the Mass during the first few years following the Council, whose style and content were often aimed at aiding the newly formed ecumenical movement within Roman Catholicism (Oppenheimer 2001: 106). However, because of their problematic lack of depth (Kiefer 1975: 128), the

“generation of seekers” (Sargeant 2000) from which the mystically-thirsty youth of Shaïda are issued (see Chapter 3) were rarely reached by them.

This “reaching” of youth is conceived of in various ways, by the youth of Shaïda. The most common way to envision it is the idea of enticing youths to realize that the Church is “not that boring”; “It’s just a group that got together,” Jérémie explains, “two people had the idea that Mass was boring, with the organ and the old songs... It started with two youths saying ‘You know, it would be more interesting if it were youth music we liked and all that. It might bring other youths to church’” (JGo-I). For Stéphane, it’s as simple as “showing them [the youth] that the Catholic religion is not always boring.” Stéphane adds: “it *can* be very fun to be Christian, and to sing in the name of the Lord” (SH-I). Jérémie explains that he believes Shaïda can reach a wide audience: “All the youths that think they’re too cool to go to Mass, it could make them open their eyes and say, ‘Oh, yeah! It’s actually not bad. It’s good. It’s interesting and it’s fun. I like that. I’m going to go from now on’” (JGo-I). Jonathan agrees, and explains that Shaïda operates in order “to prove that to pray is not just to sit in a corner and pray. It’s singing as well. It’s not always boring, like just staying in a corner. You can sing with other people and that.” (JM-I)

To make Mass “less boring” is not the only way to get youths to come; members of Shaïda believe that making Mass “cool” and interesting is also a very important element. “What we’re doing,” Jacques asserts, “is to take the church and modernize it.” He surmises that “[i]f the youths could really see that and really come to say ‘Yes, it’s cool, it’s really interesting, and I can pray with that, and it’s fun anyhow’” (JDo-I), they would

doubtlessly even look forward to going to Mass on Sunday mornings. Catherine wishes that Shaïda would be better known “not for personal recognition, but for what we have to offer to others.” She describes that the best ways of accomplishing this is “by going to different places... so people can see what it is, to better understand the other side, the amusing side there can be in church. That it helps” (CM-I).

The youths also emphasize that it is vital for *youths* to be doing this work, as opposed to adults. When the band played a Mass in Richibouctou on April 3rd 2005, for instance, Amélie gave a testimony during the time normally scheduled for the Homily. Martin enthusiastically reports her as saying: “You know, playing in a church and all that, some people wouldn’t find that cool. But look at our drummer. You can’t go cooler than that.” Martin adds, very pleased with Amélie’s portrayal of his best friend: “Nathaël, what’s more, had his sunglasses on the top of his head, there. That day, I had found that pretty good, that she had mentioned Nathaël like that: ‘Look at our drummer. You can’t go cooler than that!’” (MS-I3). Jessica explains that Shaïda conducts its Missionary Masses “so that people may know us and see: ‘Oh it’s beautiful. Youths who sing and believe in Jesus like that’” (JGa-I). Rayna gives her opinion:

I find that [Shaïda] encourages not only the youths [to attend Mass]; it [also] shows that we care for religion and it encourages. The words of the songs guide you to support the Church. When I listened to them, when I wasn’t in it, I was like: ‘Wow. There are really youths who care about this and they want to make a difference.’ I thought it was sharp (RH-I).

Lina agrees:

I think we help people, the youths especially, they think: ‘Oh, well. When THEY sing, Mass is actually cool. Mass is actually fun.’ Mass doesn’t always need to be ‘blah’ and boring. For other people, we can help them pray... The older ones, I heard say that it brings out the youth in them. It’s as if we heal them from – like, if they’re not in a good mood, from their moods (LR-I).

Jacques perceives Shaïda as not only a way to make Mass more interesting or hip, but rather as a way to demonstrate the importance of witnessing one's faith. He explains:

I think that Shaïda is a way to show them that yes, it's OK to go to Mass even if you're a youth, and it's not uncool, and it's not- There's nothing wrong or inappropriate in doing that, and there's nothing wrong with praying, there's nothing wrong with believing in that. There are many who will say 'Well, Jesus, if He exists, why don't I see Him?' Well. It's like anything else. The wind, you don't see it but you feel it. Well, Jesus you can feel Him anyhow in your heart, you can feel Him anywhere. And Shaïda, I think, is really not just a musical group who helps praying but it can also help show youth they don't need to be afraid of believing in our faith. To open them in that sense (JDo-I).

Because of the success the band had in bringing youths to church in their own parishes, Shaïda made 2004-2005 a missionary year. "They do it to be an example, a model for the other youths in those parishes," Donia says, "To show them that it's cool. It's really cool to go to church and to get involved. It's interesting and fun and that it's not boring. And that it's up to them to make the change if they want to make it" (DD-I2).

The musicians and singers not only aim to bring the youths to church; they make them participate in the service as well. The first time Isabelle came to see a performance, she was ushered onto the stage, so that she could sing along and be part of the performance. It was the same for Joelle Dufresne and her cousins, Michel and David. When the band is not recruiting new members on the spot, they invite audience participation, by singing, dancing, clapping hands or screaming for joy. After the Mass, the youths of Shaïda often take the time to speak to the other youths present, to discuss various parts of their lives. This sharing of each other's "stories," as the youths refer to people's self-narrated lives, is fundamental in the group's missionary work amongst other youths.

Some members understand the mission of Shaïda as being to help youths recognize the Church as a tool and a valuable asset on the road of life. “Shaïda’s mission,” Lina conjectures, “is to bring youths to church. More and more, you see that the youths go to church less. I think Shaïda was a way to bring youth in the church so that the youth could go again” (JG-I). Charles explains why Shaïda performs at the Mass:

it’s to show to the other youths that you can live without being obliged to follow necessarily to the letter the rules of the Church. That you can live singing songs of worship and that the music be a little more lively than just traditional songs. And to demonstrate that example. Through our song, we demonstrate the gospel and what we live. We demonstrate it, and I think it invites the youths to live the same thing (CM-I).

Jacques, who had “turned away from God” following the death of his father, hopes that Shaïda will inspire others to trust in God and, through the Church, come to know the Christ:

there are a lot of youths who don’t feel open with their religion like the others. Maybe if we don’t change them all, even if we could change one, it makes a difference. If we can help one youth that has trouble, who has his back turned to the Church, who doesn’t want to hear anything, that we can be able to open his eyes and show him who Jesus is. That He’s not there to be your enemy. He’s there to- even if He can’t do everything, He’s there to help. If you need Him, he’s there, you can turn to Him. If we changed even just one person, just there it would be a good change (JDo-I).

Jacques, and a number of other members of the band, hold that the Church is a great ally in the search for peace, and their hope is that Shaïda might help make others realize that this is the case.

The Danger of Being “Corny”

Folklorist Michael Owen Jones writes that the essential problem in the analysis of any intangible mode of expression is: “what aspect of the event, is responded to in what way and by whom” (1971: 80). “In [a] performance,” Jones asks,

is it the content of the event that is evaluated, or is it the manner of presentation, or is it both? At any given moment with regard to a particular art form or specific individual, is it the message or the medium that is especially important in generating a certain kind of response and form of evaluation? (*ibid*)

For the youths of Shaïda, it is clear that content is not the primary concern. The value of the content of their performance, after all, is mostly assured by the Church’s ritual tradition, in which the youths put their trust (see Chapter 3). In terms of aesthetics, the manner of presentation is perceived as of utmost consequence. In fact, the greatest danger to the youths’ efforts at making the Mass “cool” (which is perceived as the best way to achieve the group’s mission) is “corniness.” Perceived as a peril which continually and persistently imperilling Shaïda’s mission as well as the group’s continued existence, “corniness” is understood as being something which is at once cliché, “wussy” and “sissy,” and as jeopardizing as “the man-eating monster which lurks just around the corner” (MD-*personal communication*). Mylène explains:

That’s one of the fears of every youth: to be corny. Because it’s easy to think the church is corny. It’s easy to think everything is corny, because sometimes it really is. But Shaïda, because it’s music we like [is not]. Like the psalm you showed me yesterday: *Karma Police* with a psalm. Holy awesome. It gives a way to the youths to express their faith without corniness. Without like- You know, like ugly plastic flowers? Well. Without stuff like that (MD-I)

In order to avoid this trap, Adrien relied heavily on some youths’ opinions and initial feelings about a song before he would suggest it to the group. Mylène would most often

act as the censor: “he’d hear one, and he’d ask me, ‘Is this alright for the youths to sing?’ That was really my job. I gave my advice as a youth to make sure it was really about the youths” (MD-I). With Shaïda’s present membership, corniness is easy enough to avoid. The physical appearance of the members is far from being corny; as Chapter 7 makes clear, the manner in which the youths dress effectively counteracts the great majority of possible corny elements. In addition, since Shaïda has a no-questions-asked policy for recruitment (see Chapter 2), there is a significant number in its membership who are comfortable with the sex, drugs and alcohol lifestyle which is associated with rock music. Various excesses such as these, though not effectually considered means of promoting the band, are nonetheless not perceived as being opposed to playing in church but rather as proof of the “normalcy” of Shaïda’s membership.

Philosophy and Motivation

The rules of the Church are thought to be an important hindrance to youth attendance. As discussed in Chapter 3, members of Shaïda believe that the Roman Church is perceived as “the Big Bad Wolf” (MD-I) who imposing its unsolicited moral code, prudery and judgemental opinion on the baptized. In order to counter this, Shaïda works to demonstrate the opposites. Mylène explains that one must

take them when they’re in High School and show them that it’s- Not that it’s: ‘Oh my God! Jesus is cool, yes!’ It’s not about that. It’s just showing them that it’s not stupid and that the Church is not like how most adults see it now, like they were taught when they were younger (MD-I).

The change which must be operated in the believers' feelings about the Church from an unwelcome third party whose presence compromises the integrity and value of their lives to a useful and loving ally is major, and demands much work. Martin, who perceives religion as "a way of finding oneself and [of learning] to love oneself" (MS-I), prefers to emphasize the importance of the fraternity which is fostered through participation in the group and in the group's Masses when he describes his idea of Shaïda's mission: "To bring youths there so you meet other people who are looking for peace inside themselves and to love himself, herself, and to find the same thing in others" (MS-I).

George Davie, in his *Religion in Modern Europe*, introduces the concept of religion being a "mutatory memory" that responds and adapts to the specific local opportunities and challenges." He explains that mutation concerns the adaptations of an organism to a changing environment in order to better ensure its survival, and argues that "it's to everyone's advantage to find appropriate forms of religious life for the new millennium, in other words, to affirm healthy mutations in [our] religious heritage and to discourage others" (Davie 2000: 192). In order for the Church to withstand the societal changes which are being operated in the modern world, Shaïda's members believe a paradigm shift is necessary. However, they also hold that such a shift can be operated through their example. Jacques shares his hope in Shaïda's bearing:

Shaïda could interest the youths. There are many youths today, like I said, that think that religion is not cool and it's just for the people that it's all they believe in, and it's not important, and Jesus doesn't exist and that, and it could open their eyes, you know. Even- If they say Jesus doesn't exist, in the bottom of themselves, I'm certain they know He exists. Maybe they want to think about having that time. And I think that Shaïda is a way to show them that yes, it's OK to go to Mass even if you're a youth, and it's not uncool, and there's nothing wrong or inappropriate in doing that, and there's nothing wrong with praying, there's nothing wrong with believing in that. There are many who will say 'Well, Jesus, if He exists,

why don't I see Him?" It's like anything else. The wind, you don't see it but you feel it. Well, Jesus you can feel Him anyhow in your heart, you can feel Him anywhere. And Shaïda, I think, is really not just a musical group who helps praying but it can also help show youth they don't need to be afraid of believing in our faith. To open them up in that sense (JDo-I).

This idea of "being witnesses of Jesus and to reach[ing] out to the youths" (CL-I) is motivated by a range of motives. The need to give to others seems to be the primary motive for most of the band. "The musicians could jam until their fingers bleed," Catherine states. "But I know it's probably because of the need to belong and to give to others [that they play at Mass]" (CL-I). Jonathan recognizes that Shaïda's live performances are better appreciated than recordings: "They think Mass is more interesting when we play than if there was just a little cassette or someone who talks in front of the Mass or something." He likewise acknowledges the fact that "It makes them pray more. Sometimes, I see them, they sing at the same time as we sing. They like it" (JM-I). Mylène explains how the addition of Amélie to Shaïda's number impacted her, the band, and the community, and how the "live" aspect of performance can change people's experience of the songs played:

It was like a gift, hearing her sing. And it made you pray to hear her sing. Even from the start. And now, it has really helped her with herself, her life of faith. She was able to make the others pray, but in the beginning, she wasn't able to pray herself. Now, you can tell she's able to pray herself, and that it's good for her, and she's beautiful to watch sing (MD-I).

Because of their awareness of the importance of a live performance, the youths acknowledge the value of their performances.

Recognizing the Personal Benefits of Participation

“I like putting smiles on people’s faces in church” (JP-I), Justin responds to a question about why he plays with Shaïda. When I pressed Nathaël to explain why he participates in the band, he stated that he is involved because “people like that and it does a lot of good to people.” Feeling the need to explain, he continued: “many people say many good comments: ‘Oh I liked that, it made me feel good.’ And it makes me feel good, because we made them feel better” (NM-I). “When I’m playing at a Mass,” Justin shares, “it’s like: ‘I’m here and I’ve got a job to do. And I want to do it well, and I want to entertain these people.’ Basically, the Mass, for me, is much more fulfilling, because I’m much more involved in [it]” (JP-I). Joelle is of the same mind: “I think it makes Mass more interesting for those who go, so I like that because I feel I’m useful to people. So that people be interested. It helps people to pray” (JDu-I). Catherine agrees, and adds: “When we’re there singing our songs, want it or not, it helps people. It makes a difference even if we don’t see it. It makes a difference” (CL-I). Charles explains how this difference is operated: “You’re used to a routine, and all of a sudden you’ve forgotten what it is to be happy... and you get there and it’s like all blasted and peppy. It’s a good slap in the face. It allows you to tune yourself” (CM-I).

Alvin explains that many of the members are no longer primarily motivated by the desire to perform, but that “song has become prayer for them, they now take it seriously, and see it as a ministry they do for the Church” (AM-I). The Sacred Congregation of Rites defined the musicians’ role in the liturgy as ministerial, and specified that while they must observe the laws of the liturgy and acquire the necessary knowledge of them,

they must also make the spiritual effort their external participation supposes (*Musicam sacram* 67). Though it was acknowledged that music did have a ministerial role to play in the Mass, it was not until John Paul II's call for full, active and conscious participation in the liturgy and the life of the Church (Flannery 1996) and Vatican II officially making the faithful responsible for exercising their priesthood within the Body of Christ as the Universal Church (Searle 1990), that ministry was understood as being not only a *communal* experience, but a *mutual* one as well. In this view, the Christian's own faith and doubt, hope and despair, joy and sadness, courage and fear are best made available to others as ways of getting in touch with God (Nouwen 1989: 43).

Jonathan joined Shaïda in order to fulfill a ministry. His desire "to do volunteer work and that, to please the people, to make them pray more" (JM-I) translated in his picking up his guitar and joining the band. For Mylène, whose duties as sound technician considerably limit her involvement, it is much the same story. She says, "Even if I'm just in the back, and I'm just the sound tech, it's a way of expressing myself in that, because it's a way of putting my talents at the service [of God and the community]" (MD-I). For Nadia, this is clear; the motivation to become involved comes from her sense of responsibility towards the institutional Church:

I feel that I shouldn't just be sitting there watching it happen. I feel that I have a part to take so that the Church remains alive. The fact that I go to church is going to help the fact that the Church- that people will keep going to church. People have to keep going to church so that it remains. I always liked to do something other than just going to church. I don't feel as if it's a responsibility to take. It's just that I feel like it. I want to do something. I don't want to just stay sitting there (NB-I).

Instead of referring to their playing with the band as a ministry, many of the youths describe it as an outlet for the expression of themselves, their faith, and their belief. This

is due to the pre-Vatican II philosophy that liturgical ministry is the domain of the ordained priest, who ‘ministers’ the sacraments to the people. “A lay person helping in the celebration,” Challancin writes, “was considered a minor minister at best” (Challancin 1989: 69). Höbel notes that it was not until Vatican II that the laity were officially acknowledged as having an important ministry – an apostolate – of their own (Höbel 2002: 52). Regardless of the reason why they choose a certain vocabulary in order to describe their motivation, the youths do feel that their performance is an excellent way to use their gifts. “It’s my outlet and my way to express myself,” explains Amélie (AC-I2). For Charles, it is much the same story. “It gives me the chance to transmit what I have lived, either to the youths in the group or to other youths in the assembly who see us,” he shares. “It doesn’t matter where we are, we’ll always touch someone in the youths... Afterwards, when we meet them... they explain what they lived regarding what we showed them” (CL-I). For Catherine, who is an introvert, Shaïda helps her convey what she is living. “Through song,” she explains, “it’s the best way of communicating myself, and my prayer as well... And singing is praying twice” (CM-I).

This opportunity for self-expression is also perceived as an opportunity for deep meditation and meaningful prayer. “Singing is my prayer to God,” Amélie shares. “It’s my alone time with Him, even though I am surrounded by others when I do it. Nothing but the present moment matters” (AC-I3). “When we sing, it’s as if we’re talking to Him,” Lina shares. “It’s like when a mother sings a lullaby to her child. We sing a lullaby to God” (LR-I). Members recognize other members’ prayerful moments as well. Jacques describes Alvin’s guitar playing as worship: “sometimes, you can see he’s playing guitar,

and he smiles. You can see he's really into it... It's his way of really connecting with Jesus" (JDo-I).

Aside from its mission to evangelize youths, the members of Shaïda recognize that their need to be a part of a community motivates their membership. For most of the members, however, participation in Shaïda has not overly affected their belonging loyalty to their parish of origin. Nadia, who hails from Cocagne, feels that participation is easier in the parish than elsewhere. "Maybe it's just because I know the people more," she supposes. "If I'm at Mass at the Cathedral in Moncton, it's harder because it's not as personal, because I don't know the people and that. I'm going to hesitate more to get into that" (NB-I). St-Antoine, where Shaïda played extensively because of the parish's being part of the Sainte Famille Parish Unity, still does not feel like home for Nadia. "It's not really my church community," she shares, "in Cocagne, it's more my community" (NB-I). Charles and Catherine, who were both separated from their original church community by their moving to the city, feel most at home in l'Université de Moncton's chapel community because "they have more of a convivial aspect, and there are more youths" (CL-I). Curiously, both Charles and Catherine also take the cathedral as the epitome of what they are *not* seeking in a church: "Compared to the cathedral, [the university community] is not the same thing. It's too traditional there, and it's not what I want, and it's not what I live, so there's the fun side and a little of the traditional side there" (CL-I). For Charles as for most other members, Cocagne is a "second home." He explains: "I have the university which is the principal one, and I've become used to Cocagne, and I've come to see more of the place, so I'm starting to get attached to the place" (CM-I).

Participation in the band has, however, strengthened their ties to their own parish.

“Because of Shaïda,” shares Jérémie, “people who have come forward to tell us we did well. They took the opportunity of knowing those that are part of Shaïda a little more personally. It’s sure that it made me closer to the community” (JGo-I).

Because the band operates amongst youths in a small community, the need to incessantly take on new members is acutely felt as others leave the area for college, university, and work opportunities. “There are always new people joining. It’s always like a recycling. There’s people leaving, but there’s always someone else joining,” shares Amélie, whose busy timetable only allows for infrequent visits (AC-I4). She highlights the fact that this turnover of membership is beneficial, as it allows members to “have someone else to harmonize with, or hearing another voice. Someone else singing, or playing guitar. You know, like, seeing what everyone has to bring to the group. It’s really sharp” (AC – I4). The regular shifts in membership also allows more people to become part of the group, and join the family of performers.

The majority of Shaïda members acknowledge that they joined the band because of its being a place of belonging, and regardless of the incessant turnover of members, Shaïda is described as a pleasant atmosphere with very close-knit ties. Members recognize their own need to belong to a group, as they also distinguish it in others. Talking about belonging, Catherine shares: “for me, that’s why I come. I can be myself, and I feel at home” (CL-I). Catherine underscores that “it’s not that we depend on each other, but it almost comes to say we bring and we depend on each other. We look forward to seeing the same people to just- not necessarily talk, but just to see the person is there,

it's like 'Wow, you're still here'" (CL-I). Catherine comments that what characterizes Shaïda as a group is how well members get along. "It's a good gang," Jonathan explains, "there's always something going on. When something goes wrong, well we don't really bitch at each other, but we change our moods, and we change the rhythms and all that." (JM-I)

Much of this sense of closeness and familiarity is derived from the group's music-making, which, as Pavlicevic notes, "provides deeply personal, private as well as collective musical and emotional experiences" (Pavlicevic 2003: 104). Powerfully bonding socially as well as musically, Pavlicevic writes that music-making "provides each person in the group with the opportunity to experience a primitive, tribal, and utterly human feeling of 'being a group' – possibly for the first time in their lives." (Pavlicevic 2003: 104). "I wouldn't go talk to a person from Cocagne, like, just a person I know like that, of my faith," Nadia shares. She adds that with Shaïda, "the youths- especially because we're youths who believe and who are in church and that, it makes it easier to share one's faith. I feel more in community because of Shaïda" (NB-I).

An important element in this creation of a place of belonging is the non-judgmental atmosphere which reigns. "You can't get there and not be accepted. You just can't,"

Rayna states:

You get there, and you don't know that many people and they're just like: 'Oh!' With open arms. It's really friendly and positive. They're really nice. There's no one- That's it: you can't get there all grumpy and pissy. You can't (RH-I).

She adds: "You go there to have fun. I think it's really a very positive atmosphere" (RH-

I). Lina agrees:

in the group, you can be yourself, and the people don't care if you're weird or not the same as everyone else, or that you dress in a certain way. You can just be yourself, and you don't have to care about if you're getting judged, whatever. It's as if you're so accepted there that you just don't care what people think anymore, and you do what you want (LR-I).

Donia, whose dream it was to create such a space, understands Shaïda as a place of camaraderie and fellowship: "Shaïda gives them a place to fraternize, to come together, where they are welcomed in what they're living, for who they are, without being judged... There are smiles, there are handshakes, accolades" (DD-I). Amélie explains that for the younger members especially, Shaïda is perceived as a space where they can fit in and look up to their older peers. Speaking about why P'tite Jess came, Amélie states: "Just belonging to a group, having something in common with a bunch of people who she... thought were cool, like you, Nathaël, and Brian. That she could be a part of a group like that, which was a pretty wholesome bunch" (AC – I4).

Because the production and generation of community is "a process requiring collective endeavour, compromise, and joint action" (McEvoy 2000: 92), the group must work hard to make it happen. The first of these negotiations is that of accepting difference in its many guises. Likely the most significant in terms of meaning, the acceptance and consideration of individuals with different beliefs is vital to certain members' sense of belonging. This is especially critical for Joelle, who, being from the province of Quebec where the majority of children are not baptized, was never baptized. On Sundays, when Shaïda is performing, Joelle must wait alone on the choir risers while the remainder of the group files forward for Communion. "It doesn't bother me because I'm not there to be judged," she shares. "The people don't care" (JDu-I). Felt to a lesser extent because they

share the Eucharist with the others, some other members nonetheless have reservations about the Church, the divinity of Christ, and the existence of God. This does not seem to negatively impact the sense of unity in the group. Difference in dress is unquestionably the most referenced factor which the youths must learn to contend with (see Chapter 7 for an extended discussion on dress). Jacques, who dresses in a worldly preppy style, emphasizes Shaïda's acceptance of persons regardless of their appearance:

when you can pray with a group of people who all believe and all have the same values, and who all accept you like you are, and that you can have 50 piercings in the face or whatever, they'll not say 'What is he doing there?' or if they have a Mohawk, it doesn't matter. That's not what's important. What's important is what is inside. You really feel at ease (JDo-I).

The fact that a number of members do have very "distinct" styles has opened up the group to attacks from various churchgoers. This has especially been the case at certain ecumenical gatherings where Shaïda came in contact with conservative Christians, who made it clear that they thought "that it wasn't proper" (MD-I). Another factor which must be taken into consideration when discussing the negotiations which the band needs to cope with is the difference in age, which effectively separates Shaïda both from the remainder of the congregation and from the priest.

Contrary to what one may expect, these various divergences do not negatively affect the group's cohesion. As Victor Turner notes, conflict with a second party "may actually enhance a group's 'consciousness of kind,' [and] may enhance and revive its self-image." He explains that this is so because such conflict "forces antagonists to diagnose its source, and in so doing, to become fully aware of the principles that bond them beyond and above the issues that have temporarily divided them" (Turner 1998: 63). In a study of Catholic youth in Northern Ireland, Siobhan McEvoy notes that "In collaborating against

external danger these besieged populations collaborated to discourage internal dissent” (McEvoy 2000: 87). Because they perceive Shaïda as their primary place of belonging, members are inclined to band together and instead of criticizing or condemning other members’ beliefs, behaviours, and appearances, develop a sense of pride in the rich diversity that the group proudly displays.

The group does not limit its support of members to a casual acceptance of difference. Shaïda is also a good place for members to seek moral, emotional and even physical support. Mylène describes Shaïda as a space of patience and tolerance, especially in the case of P’tite Jess: “when she came, she was a little pile of excitedness. She was 13 years old, she didn’t know heads or tails about how to act with people because she had had a hard time in her life with her family and all that” (MD-I). The members of Shaïda took her under their wings, and, though many of them were often exasperated by her energy and her flirty behaviour, they unanimously grinned and bore it, hoping that P’tite Jess would one day learn to better conduct herself. Eventually, as she matured and became a young woman, P’tite Jess became one the favourites, her place in the band was so appreciated that when she moved away to go live with her mother, another girl her age was asked to replace her (also named Jessica).

Lina refers to the group as “a base that [holds] me up” (LR-I), and explains that through participation, “Our spirit is so uplifted that it gives us a kind of chemistry where we understand each other.” She adds that members feel generally the same way about most issues, “and if not, we still understand. It’s as if we went through the same thing” (LR-I). One thing most members have not gone through, however, is the loss of two

brothers and a mother in three different ways. Since the accidental death of her second brother when she was nine, Amélie had not been to a funeral, or seen a corpse. When Shaïda played for the funeral of the four St. Antoine youths, Amélie was peer pressured into going by the other members, who were of the opinion that her participation would doubtlessly aid in the healing process. Throughout the rehearsals, the performance, as well as after the fact, the other members ignored their own grief (many had been good friends with the dead) and carefully cared for Amélie, empathizing, supporting, and praying with her. "Maybe it gave her the chance to get that off her back, off her shoulders," hopes Jacques. "It's sure that it helps, in a way. It's sure that it's not easy to talk about it, but it's a lot easier to do it with people with whom you feel comfortable" (JDo-I).

Through their being supported, understood and appreciated by their peers, the members recognize their own emotional and moral growth, as well as that of other members. Catherine recognizes the change which Shaïda helped operate in her life:

I live my faith more. Not in words, but rather: I'm happier inside myself, so it reflects more my joy... Before, I found it more difficult to smile. Now, I'm more relaxed. And I'd say every time we practice, and when we play at Mass, it makes me smile more, and sometimes it makes my faith come out more, without necessarily saying something (CL-I)

Shaïda "makes an impact on the way you perceive things," Jérémie explains. "Not just necessarily religion, but really the way you perceive friendship, love, and all those things" (JDo-I). This is true for Jessica, who admits that she "had started to let go a little," and had begun to turn inwardly. "Now I'm back in," she shares, "and I'm a little more cordial

and loving than before... I think it's that Jesus gives me more joy in my heart. I like giving my joy to others, sharing it" (JG-I). Most members recognize Shaïda's role in helping them not stray from the straight and narrow. When P'tite Jess spoke in her home parish of Cap-Pele, she discussed how Shaïda had been a turning point in her life. Donia remembers that P'tite Jess shared how she was "like in a road by the wayside, in a bad road. And that Shaïda had helped straighten her, redress her, to bring her back to where she can grow in her faith" (DD-I). Certain members effect change in others not by their confidence or talent, but rather by their weakness and fragility. For Donia, it is clear that a certain member helped the group to remain concerned with the needs of the other: "she's a girl who has a need to be greeted in tenderness, and I think Shaïda does this. She has a role that the others don't have, we could say. To keep the others humble. Charitable" (DD-I).

Shaïda's Impact on the Members' Spirituality and View of the Church

Shaïda is also thought to have an important impact on its members' spiritual growth. Donia explains:

Many of the soloists and musicians- they are more interiorized than they were at first. I can say that it's a spiritual style now. I may not have said that in the beginning... There were a few who knew what it was, going to Mass and going to Communion and all that. But by doing it more and more, and listening- because they're there because they like to play, but at the same time, they're nourished by the Word of God. It's a pilgrimage, you know, I see them progress. I see many whose song is much more like a prayer now (DD-12).

For Nadia, who recognizes that Mass was once a routine, explains that through her participation in Shaïda, she began to realize the real reasons for a person to attend. For

this reason, she explains: “I now go to Mass more often for myself now, and not just for others” (NB-I). “I think that faith matures according to how many years you’re there [as a member of Shaïda],” shares Nadia. She explains: “You’re just singing about God. At one point, it has to strike you, like ‘Oh!’ you know?” (NB-I). Charles asserts that Shaïda made his faith more profound. “It came to solidify something that was there before, that I knew, but it came to bring it out. That’s what it really changed a lot at the level of my faith, as well. I’m less afraid of affirming myself with other youths because of that” (CM-I). Donia has observed the change operated in Erika: “She’s flourishing. I like to say it that way, because I think she’s just now discovering the profundity of her person, and how beautiful she is” (DD-I). As for Nathaël, Donia recognizes that Shaïda “is helping him – it helps him change. Make his way and grow in his faith” (DD-I). Alvin is thankful that the youths allow him to be on pilgrimage with them. He shares: “it’s exciting for me, because I can really see the progress that is made. I can see it’s something that’s going forward, and that opens doors. We too, [as leaders,] we are pilgrims” (AM-I).

When questioned on the impact of being members of Shaïda on their lives, most members referred immediately to their religiosity. “It brought me to church and brought me to appreciate church,” Erika begins. “I see Mass differently... before, it was a long sermon that just wouldn’t finish. Now that I know it, I see that Mass is made up of different parts, and that really changed the way in which I celebrate the Mass. I guess I know better what is going on.” She adds: “Now, you know, I go to Mass, and if I didn’t go I’m like ‘Oh my God! I missed that!’ I miss that, not going. I live my faith more, I live my religion more” (EL-I). When talking about how being a member of Shaïda has

impacted her life, Amélie is very positive: “I love how it changed me, and how I can see it transforming the other members for the good, as well as those who listen to us” (AC-I). Although she perceives herself as “more spiritual than religious,” and declares that not one member of Shaïda is “overly practicing,” this is due mostly to the very exacting standards of what she holds to be a good Roman Catholic: “I don't think many of us will actually pray in a manner that conforms – *actually* praying like saying a chaplet, whatever. But aside from that- I'm not what you'd call a Jesus Freak” (AC-I). Amélie says one chaplet per day, and is “not ashamed to wear a cross, I'm not ashamed to say that I'm Catholic, it doesn't embarrass me to defend my faith anytime” (AC-I).

Most members of Shaïda admit they stopped attending church regularly some time in their teenage years. Martin declares: “You know, I still went on Christmas and Easter, and that, but then I faded that out of my life. It was boring and it didn't speak to me. The church didn't speak to me at all” (MS-I). Questioned about her religiosity prior to Shaïda, Erika responds: “Before I can say that I wasn't a practicing Catholic. I didn't practice – I didn't go to Mass. I went to Mass on Easter, on Christmas, at funerals and weddings” (EL-I). “When I was a kid,” Nathaël shares, “I thought it [Mass and the Sacraments] was important, yeah. It's not that I started thinking it wasn't important going, it's just, that I didn't go anymore. I didn't stop going, I just didn't go anymore” (NM-I). When Nathaël did go to Mass, which was, like most non-practicing Roman Catholics, limited to Christmas and Easter, he felt “kind of hypocritical.” He shares that he went anyhow, not out of religious obligation but rather for himself. For Jacques, unlike many of the members of the band, the decision to stop attending church was conscious and purposeful.

When his father passed away, he reports that he began to feel that church “was like a jail.” He explains: “You didn’t want to hear about it” (JDo-I).

Significantly, for most members of Shaïda, the decision to be a practicing Roman Catholic (or not) is little related to belief in Jesus as the Christ or in God. Jacques relates that although he was mad at God for allowing his father to die, his belief in God was not the issue. “Even if you want or don’t want to hear about it,” Jacques explains, “He’s there anyhow, and that you want it or not” (JDo-I). When I asked Nathaël whether he had always believed in Jesus even while he was no longer attending Mass regularly, Nathaël responded with an “Of course” that was so patently self-evident that it made me feel like my question was absurd and obtuse.

Deep Play

The members of Shaïda invest an important portion of their talent, their time, their money and themselves to the band. When I asked Nathaël how playing with Shaïda changed his life, he responded: “of course it’s affected my life. Now, when I come back from working night shift, instead of going to bed, I go play with Shaïda” (NM-I). At first, I brushed this off as superfluous, and sought a more “noteworthy” answer to the question. By ignoring this, however, I was overlooking how deeply being a member of the band did affect his life; as Nathaël does shift work, twice monthly he goes without sleep for a minimum of 48 hours in order to perform at Mass with the band. The same is true for Martin, who works nights and often goes without sleep for days in order to be available.

Roman Catholic theologian Henri Nouwen writes that there are two main ways by which Man “tries to break out of his cocoon and fly: The mystical way and the revolutionary way” (1972: 15). Though several of Shaïda’s youths are keenly interested in the mystical (see Chapter 3), they unanimously consider themselves part of the latter category. “While aiming at the revolution, [the revolutionary] is not just motivated by a desire to liberate the oppressed, alleviate the poor, and end war,” explains Nouwen (1972: 15).

The radical activism which motivates Shaïda’s members has, since the creation of the group, taken on various forms. The project with the most radically revolutionary purpose was M.A.R.V.E.L. (Mouvement d’Activistes Régional pour la Vie, l’Egalité, et la Liberté), which was formed by Shaïda youth and other members of the community in 2003. Working towards the economic and social liberty of the Third World, the group organized meetings where they discussed the promotion of “fair trade” products, wrote letters on behalf of Amnesty International, and prepared campaigns to pressure governments into allowing free access to clean water for all people. The first major project that the group carried out was the financing of two fresh water wells in Pont-Rouge, Haiti, where Sister Reine Godbout, the Cocagne choir’s former director, worked with the poor. Other projects have included the Missionary Masses the band has celebrated throughout the province of New Brunswick, the recording of a CD of prayers and psalms (Appendix I), the organization of the World Youth Day pilgrimages in Toronto and Köln, and the organizing of special concerts for Easter. From discussing the matter with the youths, it seems that a deep and genuine commitment of the members to

the band, the Roman Church, and society in general is the only truly admired devotion (c.f. Geertz 1973).

CHAPTER 5: CATHOLICITY AND SHAÏDA'S REPERTOIRE

Functions of Music in the Mass: The Holy See's Official Perspective

For many, music is not only an addition to worship, but an integral part of it. In a Barna survey (2002), more than four out of five pastors (84%) and more than half (55%) of congregants said music is very important in facilitating effective worship.

Significantly, the pastors questioned in this survey actually rated music second only to prayer in importance. Underlining music's importance in the liturgy, the Roman Catholic Liturgical Conference which was assembled in 1963 wrote: "The liturgy, after all, is a celebration, and a celebration without music is alien to human experience" (Liturgical Conference 1963: 24). In his Encyclical, *Musicam sacram*, Pope Pius XII insists on the role of music in the liturgy with even more certainty: "One cannot find anything more religious and more joyful in sacred celebrations than a whole congregation expressing its faith in song" (*Musicam sacram* 16).

According to official documents of the Institution, the second most important role of music (after the participation of the faithful) is to build community and enhance what Victor Turner refers to as the feeling of 'Communitas' (Turner 1974). Since "worship is the expression of faith [and] as such..., the worship of the faithful" (Liturgical Conference 1963: 29), it serves to unite God and Man. Moreover, music also serves to unite the members of the congregation with one another; singing, according to Roman Catholic theologian Vincent Ryan, "is, at least potentially, a very powerful means of helping us to be whole human persons at Mass, persons who find joy in being and acting

with other persons in the love of Christ” (Ryan 1967: 19). Singing also serves to create a better sense of community. “Many voices singing in unison,” Ryan writes, “expresses, and helps to deepen, the unity of minds and hearts” (Ryan 1980: 68). The creation and consumption of music pulls people together and symbolizes their sense of collectivity and place; Catholic theologian Irénée Henri Dalmais writes that song can serve “as a means of manifesting unanimity of outlook.” She explains:

because by its rhythm and melody it produces such a fusion of voices that there seems to be but a single singer. As a matter of fact, once there is question of more than a small group of people, song alone makes it possible for an assembly to express itself as one (Dalmais 1987: 143).

While popular music anthropologist Sarah Cohen posits that music is effective in producing a sense of identity and belonging, and can articulate both individual and collective identities (2002: 276), musicologist Phillip Tagg indicates that music is an “extremely particular form of interhuman communication” which involves

a concerted simultaneity of non-verbal sound events or movements. [This makes music] particularly suited to expressing collective messages of affective and corporeal identity of individuals in relation to themselves, each other, and their social, as well as physical, surroundings (1981: 1).

Over and above all this, music is also profoundly unitive for its producers, as music therapist Mercédès Pavlicevic explains:

the exaltation of being part of a huge collection of people that becomes as one in the moment: this ‘oneness’ is formed by both the performers and the ‘audience.’ All seem to be a part of the music, and we all experience a profound human experience of collective intimacy – of managing to be of one mind and soul in music (2003: 147-8).

This view is akin to psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of “flow,” where the person achieves total unity (“the groove”) with the activity, space, and people involved with oneself for a time (1991).

The third most important role of music, according to the Constitution on the Liturgy, is its hierarchal role. After aiding participation and the building of community, music serves to structure the community's prayer by helping to divide the various participants' functions (Liturgical Conference 1963: 30). As Pavlicevic notes, moreover, music is pivotal to public occasions, as it becomes "associated with certain events, creating powerful collective associations and memories, which contribute to our sense of belonging to a certain place and time – and to a certain music" (2003: 198). Cohen explains that music frames "wedding ceremonies and religious festivals [and the like], setting them apart from other daily activities, heightening their symbolic significance" (2002: 264). She continues:

Musical events, whether involving small family gatherings or grander community rituals, festivals, and celebrations, and musical practices such as the exchange of musical artefacts, illustrate music's role in the social production of that neighbourhood... Music also came to represent the neighbourhood, whether through well-known local musicians who came to symbolize it and acted as its ambassadors; or through the use of particular musical genres and styles that evoked a collective past and tradition (Cohen 2002: 267).

According to official doctrine, music serves to create a festive atmosphere and an air of triumph to a Mass, as it did during the momentous occasions in the history of Israel's salvation (i.e. after the crossing of the Red Sea [Exodus 15:1-20], at the entry of the Ark in Jerusalem [2 Samuel 6:5], at the dedication of Solomon's temple [2 Chronicles 5:12]) (*Musicae sacrae* 11).

A fourth function of music in the Mass is carried out through its ability to communicate and explain the indescribable. Music can help us experience greater intensity of living by upsetting our normal time values (Blacking 1976: 51), as it can serve as a mode of human expression and communication (Pavlicevic 2003: 186). The

Constitution on the Liturgy points out that the proper music can and does enable all to grow in an understanding of the sacred rites that are within the people's powers of comprehension (Constitution on the Liturgy 34). This pastoral function of music is also evident, as Saint Augustine emphasized in his Confessions, in music's power to make words more forceful and intelligible and thus allows congregants to give a more intense assent to them and to meditate on them (Confessions IX, 6:14).

Social Ethicist and theologian Roger Shinn, writing about the artist's role in modern culture, quotes Paul Klee: "Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible" (1962: 72). Shinn concludes that if art 'makes visible,' it is therefore revelatory, as it helps disclose hidden qualities in the outer and inner world. "It awakens the perceptions of men to aspects of reality unrecognized by the jaded, habitual, or prejudiced eye and ear" (*ibid*) Shinn concludes that it is this revelatory function that makes the artist "both priest and prophet of his culture." He continues:

As priest the artist mediates to a people a vision of the wonderful... he consecrates and enhances the treasured values of a people. He forms and transmits the symbols by which a society understands itself and its loyalties... As prophet, the artist unmask the false sanctity that pervades every culture (73).

Folklorist Gerald Pocius notes that prior to the Enlightenment, people did not consider art as a means of individual expression, but rather as a reflection of "the divine order inherent in all worldly things" (2003: 44), which has the practical aim of "movi[ng] humans towards their quest for salvation" (1995: 415). Art's "making visible" is the fifth and final function of music in the liturgy highlighted by the Roman Church. The ability of music to communicate grace is clearly voiced by the Liturgical Conference, who wrote that the music of the liturgy is didactic as "it takes the sacred texts and clothes them with newer

shades of meaning, [making] them more capable of eliciting a response” (Liturgical Conference 1963: 31). The Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Liturgy* reads as such:

not only when things are read which were written for our instruction, but also when the church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God so that they may offer him their spiritual homage and receive his grace more abundantly” (*Constitution on the Liturgy* 33).

The images and experiences engendered by music are, of course, dependent upon the particular circumstances in which the music is performed and heard, and upon the type of musical style and activity involved. But through its embodiment of movement and collectivity, and through the peculiar ambiguity of its symbolic forms, music can appear to act upon and convey emotion in a unique way (Pavlicevic 2003).

Music and Participation in the Holy Mysteries

Shaïda's primary purpose in the context of the Roman Catholic liturgy, according to most veteran members of the band, is not to make beautiful music, but rather to assist the congregation in its participation in the Mass. This concurs with the Roman Church's understanding of the role of music, i.e., that of enlisting and eliciting the full participation in the liturgy by all the faithful (Liturgical Conference 1963: 29). In his Encyclical *Mediator Dei* (1947), Pius XII repeated his predecessor's call for the active participation of the faithful, and the Second Vatican Council highlighted its importance. As Moleck reminds us, the word 'participation' recurs twenty-six times in *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Moleck 1989: 8). The first concrete changes began in April 1964 when,

at Communion, Catholics began responding to the priest's 'Corpus Christi' with an 'Amen.' Other efforts to encourage participation included the turning around of the altars and the election of lay parishioners to read the Epistle and the Psalm. By May of 1967, the English (vernacular) translation of the canon was begun, and in 1969, the new lectionary was finally ready and a new English (vernacular) Order of Mass was published shortly thereafter (Burns 1992: 137-8). Associated with this was the Roman Church's "concerted effort to stop paraliturgical activities during the celebration of the liturgy by the congregation (such as praying the rosary or other devotions)" (Primiano 1999: 196). After all, it was Mother Church's earnest desire

that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people,' (1 Peter 2: 9) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 14)

In addition to this, it was stressed that "participation must be not only active but intelligent and devout or interior," as Dalmais explains:

The minds and hearts of the faithful must be in tune with their voices when they sing or carry on dialogue; they must make their own the prayer of the celebrant as they listen to it; they must listen to the Word of God with docility. At certain moments the celebration will require them to recollect themselves in a sacred silence" (Dalmais 1987: 99-100).

The various ministers directly involved in the production of the Mass are responsible for creating an environment (in the global sense) where these can take place. In order to facilitate the assembly's prayer, listening, silence, and action, the Second Vatican Council instructed the ministers to take into account their audiences' aesthetics:

it is useful for the musicians... to know which forms they consider to be archaic or modern or out of style; which are considered popular, or elitist, or common; which are good or bad according to experts and / or users; which are sentiments, or austere, or prayerful, or

distracting. She / he must know which individuals and groups are concerned about these reactions (ULG #9.3).

Inculturation, Acculturation and the Vernacular

Because of the Church's renewed emphasis on the participation of the laity and its introduction of the vernacular in the Roman Mass, it is especially important today that she take into account the genius, aesthetics and talents of her several members. Although the Constitution highlights that this should be especially well considered in "mission lands" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 119), a great number of theologians have pointed out that this "does not mean that only they have the problem." Gerard Sloyan, a Roman Catholic theologian, explains that those cultures that are most developed musically "cry out for this adaptation more than any others" (1965: 115). The Vatican's recognition that a people's own musical traditions play a great part in their religious and social life (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 119) reveals the Roman Church's philosophy that "worship which reflects the heart of a people, illuminating their gifts while acknowledging their limits, comforts and encourages us in this journey toward divine affirmation" (Pérez 1988: 11). Burns notes that since the 1970s, Roman Catholics "have learned... that different styles of liturgy are needed for different people, since there are so many subjective differences among the faithful." He further notes that Catholics "have also learned that not all the Sunday Masses need to be celebrated in exactly the same modality" (Burns 1992: 138).

The Institutional Church's renewed attention to the import, meaning, and purpose

of the vernacular in the context of the Mass has resulted in the various ministers' taking notice of the reaction of their congregations. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* has called the faithful "to strive to truly inculturate the worship into the various cultures of the world" (Pérez 1988: 20). This inculturation, necessarily entailing the inclusion of at least some aspects of popular religiosity and popular culture, as these two elements form part of the same continuum (see Narváez 1995 on the folklore-popular culture continuum), has been difficult to operate in the Church. However difficult, the change has been judged necessary, and perhaps rightly so; Chidester notes that "successful religious groups generally adopt the material cultures, the visual media, the musical styles, and features of popular culture" (Chidester 2004: 31). When popular culture, and human culture in general, enters the liturgy, it becomes integrated into the activity. "For the faithful, the use of music in the liturgy cannot be considered solely a product of the surrounding culture. Its use is continually questioned and challenged by the evangelical experience" (ULG #2.3).

While the Church stipulates that it is important to avoid a syncretism "which would set Christian rites side by side with rites or customs that are too closely associated with the pagan religions," Dalmais notes (1987: 128), and while it "of course certainly has its limits" because of its subjection to distortion and superstition (*On Evangelization in the Modern World* 48), popular religiosity is well looked on by the institutional Church. Paul VI noted that a well oriented popular religiosity "is rich in values" and "makes people capable of generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism [because] it involves an acute awareness of profound attributes of God... [and] it engenders interior attitudes

rarely observed to the same degree elsewhere” (*On Evangelization in the Modern World*

48). The Conference of Puebla also took care to highlight its benefits:

Popular piety represents such positive aspects as a sense of the sacred and the transcendent; openness to the Word of God; marked Marian devotion; an attitude for prayer; a sense of friendship, charity, and family unity; an ability to suffer and to atone; Christian resignation in irremediable situations; and detachment from the material world (Conference of Puebla, #913; in Pérez 1988: 7).

The modern attention to popular piety in the context of the Mass was largely a result of Pius X’s 1903 *Motu Proprio*, where he called for a return to tradition by maintaining that active participation in the holy mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church is “the first and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit” (*Tra le sollecitudini*), which had the effect of inviting the faithful to pay closer attention to the liturgy and their paraliturgical activities.

The Initial Stages in Repertoire Building

The vocation of those in charge of the ministry of song, according to the Roman Church, is to select fitting pieces and to perform them with the assembly in such a way that they “perfectly meet the requirements of the specific ritual act and the dynamics of the whole liturgical action” (Costa 1991: 69). However, as sociologist and popular culture theorist Simon Frith has pointedly argued, music is both a social practice *and* a process (1982). In the very beginning of the group’s playing at Mass, choosing which songs to be played was a difficult task. Neither Adrien nor Alvin had ever paid close attention to choral repertoire, although Adrien had been a member of the Cocagne parish choir for a

number of years. For this reason, the repertoire of songs performed during the first few Masses was made up primarily of liturgical hymns they had learned in the Scout and Girl Guide movements and songs youths remembered from their childhood catechism classes, a number of which were remnants from the old folk masses of the 1970s. The remainder consisted mostly of songs borrowed from the existing parish choir collection, mostly from the active repertoire of the choir.

While the borrowing from the youths' childhood repertoire was successful, the parish choir's repertoire proved to be a poor resource. The parish choir's songs are mostly older songs, melodically simplistic, and heavily dependent on the organ. These problems rendered the songs disappointing on an aesthetic level for most of the band. Further, as many of these songs were written in the context of the ecumenical movement immediately following the Second Vatican Council, a number of them were "permeated with a superficial optimistic humanism (Kiefer 1975: 329) which ran contrary to the youths' penchant for the mystical (see Chapter 3). Although many of the songs borrowed from their childhood repertoires were flawed in much the same manner, they were not as problematic, as the youths were comfortable adapting and altering them to their needs. Songs in the parish choir's repertoire, on the other hand, were perceived as "sacred." At this point in the group's evolution, members did not envision the possibility of adapting them to their needs.

Perhaps more significant was the fact that Shaïda did not play the parish choir's songs as well as their adult counterparts. As most other choirs, St. Pierre de Cocagne's choir chooses songs on the basis of whether they can perform them well, and chooses

performers on the basis of who has sung these songs in the past. This meant not only that their choice of song did not necessarily reflect the songs most appropriate for the occasion (a problem Shaïda quickly had to come to grips with), but also that the choir did in fact play and sing its songs quite well. This use of the same repertoire by Shaïda opened the door for much criticism, as the use of the same songs by the two choirs invited parishioners to compare the two and evaluate the youths' performance in this light.

A further problem concerning the use of songs from the parish choir's repertoire was the youths' understanding of the nature of, and reason for, the Mass itself. The youths insisted that their older peers' repertoire was simply not appropriate for the *celebration* of a Mass. The youths considered the songs as issuing from a time where the prevailing images of God and his Church were rather more intent on the *sacrifice* of the Mass for the forfeit of Mankind's Sin and sinful nature (for a discussion of the youths' ideas about the prior generation's theology, refer to Chapter 3, and for a detailed analysis of the youth's celebratory understanding of the Mass, refer to Chapter 5).

After having performed in a few Masses, Donia, Adrien and the youths recognized the paucity of the band's repertoire, and began to actively seek out new material. This was especially difficult because, having no formal training, most of the group could hardly distinguish the different parts of the Mass from one another – never mind understand their function. Moreover, the members of Shaïda were not aware of the importance of music that is “musically, liturgically, and pastorally appropriate” (Pérez 1988: 31) as accentuated by the post-Vatican II Church. Instead, they perceived the music primarily as the “entertainment element” of the Mass, its function being limited to making

its various mandatory components less painful to sit through. Adrien began to make inquiries, listen more attentively to other sources, and ask the opinion of the youths: “I started with a group of young people to look for songs that would be more appropriate for a Mass. It was a lot of research on our part. Donia, my wife, helped me a lot in that, finding appropriate songs for each part of the Mass” (AD-12).

Issues in Theology and the Roman Church’s Liturgical Calendar

At this early point in the history of the band, Adrien and Alvin were unaware of the finer points regulating what can and should properly be performed during each specific Mass according to the Roman Church, whose position is clear. As Roman Catholic theologian Eugenio Costa notes, to be included in the liturgy, music need not be “‘sacred’ or ‘religious,’ but a music that fits the ritual action *like a glove*” (1991: 68). This failure of the group to tailor their music to the requirements of the Mass occasioned several problems during the first months of the youth’s participation. In the selection of song repertoire, Edward Foley, a Catholic theologian notes that it is important to keep in mind that the assembly’s familiarity with the music, the relationship of the music to the rite, and the quality of musical leadership affect the quality of the congregation’s participation much more than the aesthetics of the songs played (1991: 84-5). The most severe consequences of Shaïda’s inability to select suitable music for the liturgy and for the parishioners present were the number of confrontations with the presiding priests and

the scandal¹⁷ of more than a few parishioners, who, frustrated by the noise levels and the unsuitable texts of much of the youths' repertoire were very vocal about their disapproval.

Donia's most significant contribution to the group (aside from its original foundation, of course) was the knowledge and theological baggage she had acquired through her active spiritual life and the university education she acquired prior to the band's foundation. Her heightened awareness of the role and function of the liturgy, the issues surrounding the Roman Church in the modern context, and her insights on youth participation and belonging in the Church made her an indispensable source of information for the leaders as well as the band. Among her contributions was her continuous insistence on the importance of following the Roman Church's directives. "It's me, if you will," she said, "who trained Alvin and Adrien to see how important it was to follow the liturgy for the Universal Church, and to use the *Prions en Eglise*¹⁸" (DD-I2).

The liturgy of the Universal Church is regulated by the Institution's liturgical calendar, which is punctuated by seasonal celebrations (such as Christmas and Easter), preparations for these celebrations (Advent and Lent), High Days (New Year's Day and Pentecost), Liturgical Feasts (the Baptism of Christ and Christ the King), and Saints' Feasts (the Feast of the Canadian Martyrs and the Feast of St. Peter). Such 'punctuations,' Mercédès Pavlicevic notes, "naturally segment the year and can help to structure... group

¹⁷ "To scandalize" in the strictly ecclesial sense, where one's *faith* is upset.

¹⁸ The *Prions en Eglise* (referred to by parishioners simply as "Le Prions") is a weekly missal, published by Novalis, which is available during most Roman Catholic liturgies in the Francophone communities of the area. Its use is also widespread all over French Canada, but the extent to which the parishioners of the Moncton diocese depend on the booklet is exceptional.

work as well as [the] choice of music and musical activities” (2003: 69). Donia, sympathetic to the value of appropriately selected music and its function in the Augustinian Mass and in the Universal Church’s liturgical calendar, relates that “the choice of song – and the right timing, and all that – is very important” (DD-I). Pavlicevic explains the importance of selecting the right music:

When helping to plan music for a social ritual... we need to remember that the choice of music may be informed by a range of meanings – at least as many meanings as there are people involved in the planning... Some of this music needs to be traditional in the wider social sense, and accessible to the wider group... [An event (such as the Mass)] brings together people who may know each other very slightly, and we want the music to be meaningful to them (Pavlicevic 2003: 159).

Having made it her personal mission to find appropriate music for the youths to perform, Donia visited *R.D. MacLean’s*, Moncton’s Roman Catholic religious articles store and *La Librairie Vision*, the Moncton Archdiocese’s bookstore, but found little material of much use. Understandably, most of the CDs stocked by these resource centers consist of choral song and spoken meditative prayers. *La Bonne Nouvelle*, Moncton’s Protestant bookstore, yielded slightly better results. After purchasing a large collection of disks, including CDs by Exo, Third Day, Sonicflood, The Newsboys, and DC Talk, Donia carefully isolated those songs which could best be adopted and readapted by the group. This process included listening to the songs, reading the lyrics and analyzing their contents in order to assess whether they could be used for the Mass and in which context, asking Mylène’s opinion, praying for guidance, and trusting her instinct. She describes the process as follows,

When I go to my retreats, I listen to the songs that speak to me and that I think Shaïda could adapt to the age of the group and their style. Sometimes, I hear some [songs] and I tell myself: ‘Oh. Amélie would sing this well,’ or ‘That would be nice for Jacques’ (DD-I2).

The Mass and its Rites

At this juncture, it may be very useful to turn our attention to the Mass and its rites, as its context greatly impacts the choice and style of music to be played and the manner in which it is approached by the youths. Further, the various rites of the Mass impose an order to the band's music-making, and its form and function deeply influences the manner in which the youths approach their task. The Mass as celebrated since the Second Vatican Council (often referred to as Vatican II) is made up of four main parts, which are in turn made up of a number of smaller rites and rituals. In order to make the following sections clearer, an exposition of these various rites is in order.

Before the beginning of the Mass the community first must gather together. Theologians and the Institutional Church are careful to underline the meaning of this assembly as well as the reason for which and manner in which it gathers. Of utmost importance to our examination of the ritual is the Roman Catholic Church's understanding that "however great the efforts of pastor and faithful to ensure the gathering, it is God who calls his people together. His initiative is prior and prevenient; the assembly is an unmerited gift of God to humankind" (Dalmais 1987: 95). The "most unique of religious practices" (Choquette 2004), the Mass, as the Roman Catholic Church understands it, does not depend upon the objectives of the people attending worship; it is something God does, and is an absolutely objective event. While this is readily acknowledged by most of the youth participants in the band, the group's primary mission

runs contrary to this philosophy; as is discussed in Chapter 4, the youths' main motivation is to encourage people to attend Mass. This is but one example of the manner in which the members of the band allow themselves the liberty of holding multiple, sometimes conflicting viewpoints (more on this in Chapter 3).

The reason for the celebration to occur is also a matter of outlook. While Martin highlights the purely functional benefits of gathering together to form community and learn about tolerance (MS-I), Amélie rather stresses the Holy nature of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and its importance to the believer. The Roman Church's position highlights instead the purely sacred nature of the Mass, positing that "the sacrifice of Christ, already accomplished on Calvary and made present anew through the Mass, is what founded the Church and now unites human beings in the assembly of the baptized" (Dalmais 1987: 95).

The Introductory Rites, whose purpose is "to make the assembled people a unified community and to prepare them properly to listen to God's word and celebrate the Eucharist" (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 24), begin with the Processional (also referred to as the Entrance Song) during which the assembled community is invited to stand. The Processional is followed by the Greeting and, ordinarily, the Penitential rite. The Kyrie, which is the most familiar variation of the penitential rite, is often sung, usually responsorially with a cantor (Withey 1990: 122). The rite is the community's statement of confidence in God's action in its life. This is followed by the sung Gloria, which serves to underline mankind's recognition of God's Saving Grace. The Opening Prayer (also called The Collect) is then spoken by the priest, which is followed by an

“Amen” from the people as their expression of ratification of all that has been celebrated (Fitzgerald 1982: 57).

The Liturgy of the Word is the second of the four main parts of the Mass. It consists of the promulgation of the Word of God, its aim being to “elicit a response of faith by the people” (Fitzgerald 1982: 61). A First Reading, taken from the Old Testament, is followed by a sung Responsorial Psalm. This psalm serves as the community’s response to the proclaimed Word (Withey 1990: 129). A Second Reading often follows, which is taken from the New Testament. The Gospel Acclamation (also called the Alleluia) follows, whose purpose is to “acclaim delight in God’s wonderful deeds” (Fitzpatrick 1982: 64), and is normally done through song. The Gospel is then read by the priest, and is followed by the Homily, where the priest preaches to the assembly, normally drawing from the day’s readings. The Profession of Faith (also referred to as The Creed) precedes the General Intercessions (also called the Prayer of the Faithful), which end in an Amen from the assembly, again, as a ratification of what has been celebrated.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist is much more complex than the Liturgy of the Word. The Church holds that it is in this ritual sharing of the Bread and Wine, the Presence of Christ, that the faithful are reconciled to God and to each other (Wentz 2003: 153). Since this section of the Mass relies less on musical accompaniment than the others (as too much music could prolong this part of the liturgy unduly [Withey 1990: 141]), a cursory examination of its various (non-musical) parts will suffice for the purpose of this study.

The Preparation of the Gifts, the Commingling of the Water and Wine, the Washing of Hands, the Invitation for Prayer, and the Prayer Over the Gifts precede the Eucharistic Prayer. The Preface precedes the Epiclesis, the Institution Narrative, the Elevation of Bread and Wine, the Acclamation of Faith, and the Anamnesis. The Offertory follows, being the petition of the assembled community to God so that He may accept the offering of the Church. Memorial Intercessions and the Doxology precede the Communion Rite, which is the mainstay of the Mass. Although the Doxology can be sung, Shaïda has not performed it since the Archbishop of the diocese of Moncton strongly encouraged his priests to request the silence of the parishioners, determining that the rite would best be underscored and appreciated by the assembly if the priest said it alone.

The Communion Rite is the culmination of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and of the Mass itself. Composed of a number of other rites, it is also the most solemn part of the Mass. The Lord's Prayer (also called the Our Father or the *Pater noster*) is the opening portion of the Communion Rite, and since the Second Vatican Council, can be sung, although it is rarely performed by Shaïda, for reasons addressed in Chapter 7. The Embolism is also sung irregularly by the band. The Sign of Peace and the Breaking of the Bread follow the Embolism, which are in turn followed by the Private Prayers of the Priest. After the priest receives his bread and wine, Communion (also called Eucharist) takes place. Depending on the size of the assembly and the time it takes to dispense the Hosts, from one to three songs can be played while the parishioners partake of the Eucharist and the priest undresses the altar. The Prayer After Communion concludes the

Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The fourth and last section of the Mass consists of the Concluding Rites, which focus on the sending forth of the community. These rites are made up of three unvarying parts: the Greeting, the Blessing, and the Dismissal, although in certain parishes, announcements and community-interest items are addressed following the Greeting. Following the dismissal, there usually is a Recessional song during which the assembled community leaves the church and goes out into the World.

Since the Roman Church, and her leaders (cardinals, bishops), thinkers (philosophers, theologians), workers (priests, lay brothers and sisters), and followers (the laity), emphasize the meaning, purpose and worth of the Mass' several parts, and since the Church operates corporately using the same rite across all continents, respecting the traditions, conventions, and organization of the Mass is vital to the continued existence of any group who ministers in its service. The basic principle which underlies the relationship between the liturgy and music, according to the Liturgical Conference, is that "music is a servant in the house of the Lord" (Liturgical Conference 1963: 24). They write:

Although music is superior to the other arts in general, it is even more so in the liturgy, but only to the degree that it is willing to adapt itself to the needs of the cult, and to be circumscribed by its demands. By this extramusical limitation, Church music is distinguished from secular music, and from religious music (which does give expression to religious sentiments, but apart from its use in the liturgy) (Liturgical Conference 1963: 24).

The Art of Repertoire Selection: Problems with Evangelical Material

Within a year of the group's formation, a number of members began to better grasp the purpose and meaning of the Mass and of its music. Nadia articulates, "the music we choose now – not that it didn't mean anything back then, but I feel that now it's more to find music which has a link to what is going to go on at Mass" (NB-I). Issued from this new knowledge and understanding of the Mass, the youths began to realize the value of a sizeable repertoire from which songs appropriate to every occasion could be borrowed. For this reason, the band began seeking out and exploiting songs from a number of other sources. Classics from a number of other parishes' hymnals were adopted, and the band began to revamp the traditional songs they already knew that they found in the *Prions en Eglise*.

The first problem encountered by Shaïda in terms of repertoire was the band's difficulty in selecting songs suitable for use in the Augustinian Mass. "The principle of participation is not satisfied by inserting into the Mass a number of favourite hymns," Donald Withey, a Roman Catholic theologian writes. He explains:

A hymn should be chosen because it is a good entrance hymn, or a good offertory hymn, or a good hymn for the liturgical season or feast. In addition, hymns are not the only material for singing, and consideration must be given to other material, such as chants, psalms, songs, acclamations, and litanies (Withey 1990: 250).

Moreover, being an "autonomous science," music is "governed by laws that lie beyond the scope of liturgical discipline" (Liturgical Conference 1963; 17). Music's fondness for the personal and its manward direction are the greatest stumbling blocks it imposes by its use in the Mass. The Liturgical Conference explain that liturgy goes beyond the personal

“to give expression to the communal, and is Godward in its direction of giving delight, not manward” (Liturgical Conference 1963: 17). Members of Shaïda soon realized that “good music” did not necessarily equate with “good *liturgical* music.” For youths who, on the whole, did not have a background in music or pastoral studies, the selection of an adequate repertoire for this task was very difficult; the temptation “to be satisfied with aesthetic feeling and not move on to the text that the music is meant to make more attractive” (Dalmais 1987: 144), is to be avoided.

The Church’s official position in the music to be used in the liturgy is that “no music is in and of itself profane or sacred, liturgical or Christian” (ULG, Convictions IX). The same document further stipulates that “all music created by the people, as long as it is not self-serving or self-reflective, but leads people to the evangelical promise, can serve Christian worship” (ULG #10.2). The first concern of most Roman Catholics concerning the music to be used is that it be “sacred.” However, defining the “sacred” is often very difficult. Eugenio Costa writes that all things are secular before they become Christian. “The assembled people, their culture, and hence the cultural raw materials making up the liturgical situation and action are secular before they become anything else” (1991: 66). Costa continues: “Everything is secular, but everything can be used to celebrate Jesus Christ” (*ibid*). Although this is the case, however, “the musical practices of a given culture are not equally available or immediately usable in the liturgy” (ULG #2.6), as,

like every other set of symbols we employ in worship, music inevitably communicates cultural and not simply religious messages. Music remembers the cultural context in which it was born; music is indelibly stamped with a cultural message which it perpetuates whether it is projected on a video screen, transmitted over radio waves or employed in the liturgy. The music we employ in our worship is not culture free. It carries implicit cultural messages that cannot be eliminated, though we might try to ignore them (Foley 1991: 82).

In order to be considered adequate for use in the liturgy, therefore, it is important that music be not overly tied up with, or overwhelmed by, its history or origins. Further, in order to be considered “sacred,” music must be “connected with the ritual action” (*Constitution on the Liturgy* 112). For this reason, to state that Shaïda’s music is “sacred” is not missing the mark. Sacred Music, according to Joseph Gelineau, a Catholic theologian, is simply music, “which, by its inspiration, purpose and destination, or manner of use, has a connection with faith” (1964: 59). Moreover, as Edward Foley and Mary McGann highlight, music that is wedded to text, accompanying an action, such as that Shaïda performs during the Eucharistic Celebration, is the truest form of ritual music, inseparable from the rite itself (1988: 13-18).

The opposite of being satisfied with aesthetic feeling and not moving on to the text that the music is meant to make more attractive, i.e., to be satisfied with text, and not move on to aesthetic feeling, is also to be avoided. It is established by the Roman Church that in order to be effective in worshipping God, music must first edify the congregation. Theologian Erik Routley points out that the Protestant perspective, “where ‘edification’ is more narrowly defined to mean instruction through the spoken word, and ‘participation’ is increasingly restricted to mean vocal participation,” is inadequate for, and incompatible with, the Roman Mass (1978: 114-5). Shaïda borrowed from American contemporary Christian music bands such as Third Day and Jars of Clay very early on in. Because most contemporary Christian music produced in North America is produced in the context of conservative Evangelicalism, which is a very different environment with very different concerns than that of the Roman Catholicism in which the youths operate, they soon

began to understand the use of material from the more vibrant and prolific Protestant youth tradition of music-making as problematic because of the important differences in theology and philosophy.

Evangelical artists produce three types of music: proselytizing, worship, and exhortative. Evangelical authors and music critics Jay Howard and John Streck explain:

When music is intended to evangelize, it is directed at non-Christians; when music is intended to be used for praise and worship, it is directed at God; and when the music is intended for exhortation, it is directed at fellow believers (1999: 67).

When members of Shaïda began to question the function of the various elements of the Mass, they began to hold the opinion that exhortative music and proselytizing music were ill-fitted for the purpose of the Mass. Perceived by art theorist and philosopher Hans Rookmaaker as “a perverted kind of utilitarianism” (1970: 154), most Roman Catholic theologians would argue that proselytizing music is objectionable. Rookmaaker explains:

If the supreme purpose of art is no longer to sing the praise of the Lord and be a joy to one’s fellow-beings but rather to provide a tool for evangelism, then artists soon cease to ask whether art is good and beautiful, only whether it can be used effectively to convert people. In asking such questions, Christians are not far from trying to manipulate the people they want to reach (1970: 154-5).

A number of members made it clear that this was indeed a grave concern. However, perhaps more significantly, Evangelical music’s exhortative penchant made the large part of Shaïda’s members very uncomfortable. Because the band is made up of Christians and non-Christians, believers and non-believers, and, in Amélie’s words, “saints and sinners” (*AC-electronic communication*), the band members did not judge themselves worthy or adequate to the task of instructing others in “the good life.”

Related to the exhortative penchant of Evangelical music is the proclivity of a certain number of its artists to lecture at length about themes such as theology, the nature of God, and the nature of Man's relationship to Him. Many of these songs, because of the very different philosophy which animates them, are jarring to the youths of Shaïda, whose (mostly) Roman Catholic sensibilities are particularly dissonant with conservative Protestant Christianity's various positions on matters of faith, especially concerning "Absolute Truth" (see Chapter 3). Most of the members of the group would agree with Howard and Streck when they suggest that

[i]nstead of offering pat answers, Christian artists should probe the enigmas and mysteries to show life as it really is: full of loose ends and unfinished questions. They should acknowledge that Christians don't have all the solutions to the world's problems. While Christ does have those desired solutions, Christians still peer through the glass darkly and must admit that His thoughts are not our thoughts (Howard and Streck 1999: 133).

A case in point is discussed by folklorist Ronald Loewe in his analysis of a Mexican carnival:

Whereas evangelical Protestantism is totalizing and seeks to reform the sinful nature of man, the Catholic Church operates by establishing boundaries between different spheres of human activity... The debaucheries associated with carnival pose no threat to the moral order and the Church, as long as the perpetrators conclude their activities on time and show up for mass on Ash Wednesday (Loewe 2003: 423).

The frequent opposition of black and white, good and evil, and right and wrong in Evangelical music is a philosophy which is in direct opposition to the Roman Catholic view of life. As Evangelicals see that "Christian" and the "secular" as locked in opposition, the members of Shaïda are convinced of the opposite. Rayna, for instance, is taken aback by the Evangelical idea that nature is evil, and rather perceives nature as proof of God's existence and goodness: "How can you not believe? Look! Look outside. Look at the rain. The trees. The grass. Look at yourself!" (RH-I).

Another major drawback to songs borrowed from Evangelicalism was that a number of members reported that these all-too-often “felt empty.” This is explained by Leonard Payton, who affirms that much of present-day Christian music is beset by a “vacuity of musical and poetic form together with dense spectrum and amplitude.” He writes that while this music “[delivers] a steady torrent of overwhelming stimuli to our brains,” it demands no thought (1993: 13). As considered in Chapter 3, the youths of Shaïda value highly the mystical and the immanent. The inclusion of what Nadia refers to as “I Love Jesus” songs (NB-I) in the Mass seems out of place, at times even offensive to members. This is not limited to members of Shaïda or Roman Catholics. A Barna study revealed that nearly half of all worship attenders, in all denominations, felt that the words in the currently popular praise and worship songs lack the spiritual depth of traditional hymns (Barna 2002).

Although the band relied heavily on these predominantly evangelical bands during the first two years of its ministry, this source gradually declined in importance as the youths’ increasingly came to understand the significance of each part of the Mass. Of the Evangelical material which was once in Shaïda’s repertoire, more than 90% has since been abandoned for these reasons. Songs which have since been eliminated from Shaïda’s repertoire for this reason include Sonicflood’s entire repertoire, as well as Third Day’s “You Are So Good To Me” and “City on a Hill,” among a gamut of others.

The Liturgical Conference’s warning that liturgy must go beyond the personal to give expression to the communal, and stipulation that the music used must be Godward in its direction of giving delight, not manward” (Liturgical Conference 1963: 17), presented

yet another difficulty in the youths' use of Evangelical material. The use of the first person which dominates the great majority of Protestant songs is another important reason why Shaïda has abandoned much of its Protestant repertoire. Whereas the Roman Catholic Church, because of its emphasis on the inevitable corporate union of those assembled to celebrate, has consistently allowed only the use of the plural "we" in most parts of the Mass, the various Protestant denominations have highlighted instead the importance of personal choice in Salvation and the liberty of the individual. Rayna voices her understanding of the difference between Shaïda and Protestant bands from the area, highlighting how community is formed through the Mass:

They all have professional training and all that. According to me, it's just us. We're good at what we do, and it's youths. They were older. It's youths from the community. And them, I'm sure they know each other since forever. And with us, like me, there's maybe three people I know really well (RH-I).

Although members of Shaïda readapted a number of Protestant songs to be used in the context of the Mass, the majority of those in the band's repertoire were eventually dropped and replaced by material which was considered a better fit for the celebration.

The Protestant question is also limited by the factor of the language barrier. Because the Evangelical Church has not established an important French base in North America, and because the youths of Shaïda feel they are limited in the number of English songs they should play in a French Mass, the number of Protestant songs in their repertoire is limited. It would be easy to underestimate the importance of this. During the World Youth Day celebrations in Köln, when the youths of Shaïda got together to make music with the other (Anglophone) Roman Catholic youths of the diocese, the difference between their repertoires was astounding. Most of the Anglophone youths' repertoire

consisted of Protestant worship songs, while the youths of Shaïda were mainly uncomfortable playing songs about faith, Christ, and God outside the context of participation in the Mass.

Other problems associated with Shaïda's playing Protestant songs are occasioned by the semantics of certain words such as "Cross," "Blood," "Body," "sacrifice," "save," and "debt." Because the Roman Catholic youths do not understand the loaded terms in quite the same manner as their Evangelical peers, they are prone to dismiss the songs as nonsensical, as was the case for Shaïda's treatment of Sonicflood's "The Heart of Worship" as well as Third Day's "You Are So Good To Me" and Chris Tomlin's "How Great Is Our God." Although the youths recognize the musical talent of the Protestant bands, they find it difficult to appreciate the aesthetics of Evangelical rock, which is considered "corny."

After the failure of Evangelical Christian rock to supply the band with enough useable material, Shaïda members began to seek out other sources from which to borrow. Early in the group's development, a number of members became acquainted with the Marie- Jeunesse community, and were given the opportunity to hear their band, *In Ipsa*. For most members of Shaïda, *In Ipsa* was and will likely remain the first and only francophone Roman Catholic youth band with whom they came in contact. Although it was through the Marie-Jeunesse community's retreats and not through their band's performance that members of Shaïda came to know the Québec group, it nonetheless deeply influenced both the approach and the style of the young Acadians.

Shaïda's Repertoire Matures

Although in North America the terrain has not permitted the formation of many French Roman Catholic youth bands or their marketing of albums aimed at a younger clientele, the situation is much different in Europe, where bands such as Exo enjoy a worldwide following and album sales consistently in the thousands. Having stumbled upon a copy of Exo's first CD, Adrien convinced the youths to re-adapt two of the Belgian band's songs. Once readapted to their style, the youths fell in love with the sound, and subsequently readapted a good deal of their material. The members of Shaïda are pleased with the progress made by the group. Nadia relates: "we understand what we sing more. That's how [Shaïda] evolved, I think – we're more mature in our music" (NB-I).

Although the choice of songs to be played is still primarily made by Donia and Adrien, who go through the Prions en Eglise (a weekly missal published by Novalis), glean the day's Mass' main significance, and suggest songs accordingly, the youths have begun to increasingly perform this function. This song selection process has become one of the highlights of the rehearsals for a number of members. The individuals who have chosen to involve themselves in this process are mostly the senior female singers. Taking the opportunity to discuss the readings and the purpose or main message of the day's Mass, the young women take the task very seriously, and recognize the value of those few minutes as incalculable. Most members who addressed the issue commonly described the

selection process as the only time during Shaïda's rehearsals where conversations about Christ, God, belief, and faith in general could be comfortably shared. Nadia explains that when members discuss repertoire, "[t]hose are [the] little moments; aside from that, I don't find we have many moments that are focused on religion" (NB-I).

Donia is happy with the evolution made since she first began song-hunting: "I've seen the progress, since the beginning, when we first had a meeting together, myself, Adrien, Alvin and Father Yvon. We weren't really sure of ourselves. But now there's no doubt anymore" (DD-I). With practice, reading, and much reflection, Donia, Adrien, Alvin and a number of the youths, have honed their aptitude for selecting fitting songs. Donia relates, "it wouldn't be difficult for them [the members of Shaïda] to know when to sing a psalm or when to sing a song of praise. [The process of selecting songs to be played has] helped them better understand what is the Mass itself, and how it operates, and what we go do there" (DD-I).

Chapter 6: Sound, Style, and Repertoire Classification

Shaïda's Musical Style

While some members first joined Shaïda in order to serve the Church and their parish community, the great majority of those who have chosen to become involved over the years chose to do so because of the group's sound. "I had just heard a little bit [about Shaïda], and I was thinking: 'It must be all right,'" Catherine shares. "But then I heard them sing, and it was like 'OK, sign me in! Wow! Right away!' I knew it was beautiful and fun, but I didn't think it was beautiful and fun like that" (CL-I). "It was not the same type of thing you [normally] saw in a church" (JDo-I), Jacques states. Charles is more specific: "You don't have many chorals or groups which sing like that. Well. In the [Roman] Catholic church. Especially in Canada. If you look on the Protestant side, they're much more advanced than us on the side of worship" (CM-I). Catherine "was used to hear organ and choral songs." She explains: "for us, it's like a band, and you would never have believed that it would have been possible to play at church" (CL-I). Lina agrees, and adds that the incorporation of electric guitars and drums is "a good change; it goes better with our generation" (LR-I). Justin explains why this is:

We're just kind of moving with the times. The music is great, it hits like a certain note in the person's body that listens to it. It has that certain feel to it, I guess a very 'choir' feel, and then sometimes it's nice to listen to something that's what people would listen to at home. Maybe they don't turn on the radio and listen to Catholic hymns all the time, so try to bring in some country tunes, or whatever it is. Just something more appealing (JP-I).

Stéphane argues that the music of Shaïda not only makes Mass more appealing, but that it shows that

it can be very fun to be Christian, and to sing in the name of the Lord. That it's not always boring. That it's not always - sometimes, choirs in churches all sound the same. It's almost like opera. It's not always like that. It can be really upbeat and different types of music (SH-I)

"It's not a style of music I pictured myself playing before," Martin explains. He admits that although he had reservations about playing in church and serious misgivings about making "Christian music," he really enjoys the music. "It's really fun. It's really different than jamming here or elsewhere. I find it's really different. It's not the same thing" (MS-I).

Shaïda's members have difficulty defining the band's sound and style of music. Few members prove willing to venture a guess at a genre or category. For some members, the music is a mixture of genres: "There are a lot of styles. There's not really a musical style that's more so than others" (LR-I). Jessica agrees. "There are many different styles," she explains. Jessica illustrates this by listing different songs. "The Alleluia is more Jazz, and some are more like- not classical, but I don't know how to call it. There are a lot of different styles. Some are like rock, and some are not really like rock, like more calm" (JGa-I). Catherine has the same problem with definition: "Mainstream, maybe? It can vary from different songs. There are some you can call rock, or gospel. It can be different things. A mix of different things. It's like hard to put a style on it" (CL-I). For other members, Shaïda's style of music may simply not have a designation: "I don't know if there's a name for it" (AM-I). Alvin explains: "Most of our songs are existing songs that we add something more rhythmic to, instead of having an organ, let's say, we'll have a guitar, some percussions" (AM-I). "It's not just the man and the singers and the choir. It's really all the instruments. But it's not a rock concert either" (JDo-I). For Joelle, Shaïda

has its own style: “Other than saying we’re spiritual and religious music, I don’t think you can say that we’re ‘rock’ or ‘blues’ or whatever. We’re really a little of everything. We’re the Shaïda style, really” (JDo-I).

According to Martin, who has never been in contact with the Evangelical Christian world, the band sounds more “like Christian Rock. It’s a rock band with a choir, but it’s not really a choir. It’s something – You can’t really compare that to anybody” (MS-I3). Defining it more clearly, he explains his approach to creating the Shaïda sound: “It’s many styles, really, that I take from different musicians and all that, and I put that together and it comes out ‘Shaïda’” (MS-I3). This type of combination (or ‘blend’) of styles, according to folklorist Peter Narváez, “is clearly a case of syncretism in music.” Narváez defines this syncretism as “an aspect of musical change in an acculturative situation which has resulted in a fusion of similar cultural elements into new forms” (Narváez 1978: 94). Shaïda’s music is indeed a fusion of styles. I suspect that the definitional problem of members arises because the number of styles being combined surpasses their musical understanding.

As Folklorist Robert Baron comments on salsa musicians in New York City, the performers of Shaïda “apprehend the ambiguity of the syncretisms which are being created. There is considerable ambivalence towards the consequences of change” (1977: 217). Not unlike the musicians in Baron’s study, moreover, members of Shaïda “are optimistic that an essential *tipico* core will be maintained in a music enriched by change” (*ibid*). According to members of Shaïda, this “core” constitutes of certain specifically Roman Catholic modes and scales, the use of Latin, borrowing from the Church Fathers,

the tradition of petitioning the Saints and the Virgin, along with an awareness of the rhythm and progression of the Roman Mass.

Donia, who also hesitates to specify as what genre Shaïda would be classified, observes that the music is internalized by the youths (she hints that this was not the case in the beginnings), and feels comfortable calling it a “spiritual style.” She adds: “I may not have said that in the beginning” (DD-I2). Donia explains that she believes the change is due to the participants’ exposure to the Mass and to involvement in the group.

By doing it more and more, and listening – they’re there because they like to play, but at the same time, they’re nourished by the Word of God – It’s a pilgrimage, you know, I see them progress. I see many whose song is much more like a prayer (DD-I2).

“Whatever the genre’s name,” Alvin notes, “it goes by what the youths seem to like, what they’re comfortable with” (AM-I). For Stéphane, Shaïda’s style is loosely defined as “music youths listen to. Not music parents listen to” (SH-I). He notes that his mother dislikes the music he purchases, and that the band “likes to take beats from the music we listen to and make Christian songs with those beats” (SH-I). Justin underscores the fact that the music is a collective endeavour: “I think we all kind of add our own twist to it. Somebody plays it one way, and I might throw in something a little different... I think we all bring out what we have in us, what we really want to play” (JP-I). In order to bolster the musical ensemble’s repertoire, Adrien notes that the band “Shaïda-nizes” songs, giving them “a little more flair. Maybe a little more beat. Maybe a different way to sing it. Maybe we’ll change a word here and there to make it acceptable for the youth” (AD-I2). He adds: “We have a lot of fun with that.” The flexible manner of performance and the

unrestrained approach that Shaïda uses go by “what the youths seem to like, you know, what they’re comfortable with” (AM-I).

Perhaps the most obviously “pop” aspect of Shaïda’s playing, even more so than the presence of a drum kit, is the presence of a melodic bass line. Keeping the song moving because of its underlying direction, the bass line guides the playing of the remainder of the musicians. Very loud, even by pop music standards, Martin’s bass playing is rough and forceful. Having acquired a slap-and-snap technique from emulating bands such as “Primus” and “System of a Down,” Martin accompanies the band as he would alternative music groups. This is not generally perceived as problematical by the members of the group (though Adrien often hints at his toning the energy down), who generally understand it as enriching their overall sound.

Shaïda’s Sound

Shaïda’s tone is rich and diverse as a result of the wide variety of voice types in the group. The group’s singers range in age from fifteen to twenty-nine, and, on a given Sunday, the proportion of females to males tends to be sixty/forty. This wide spectrum makes Shaïda unique in terms of texture and quality of sound. While none of the members have had any formal vocal training, the maturity of their voices has developed to varying degrees due to such factors as their age and physical development, the number of years they have been singing, and in which context, environment, and styles (see Chapter 7). The male members of the group provide the most notable diversity of tone

ranging from young adolescent boys with unchanged voices to grown men with fully developed voices.

Shaïda seldom sings a song in unison; when they do, a powerful effect is achieved (whether intentional or not). Because of the singers' love of harmony, the texture is generally rich. Singing together in Shaïda has helped certain singers develop the ability to hear and improvise harmonies. Having developed a certain ease in their respective octave, range, and style, harmony lines tend to be sung by the same few people throughout the repertoire.

Shaïda makes use of a wide range of different tempos that suit the various parts of the Mass. The song of assembly, also called the processional, has a tempo which invites the procession to march in step and enter into the Mass with confidence. The song is normally upbeat, as Shaïda normally plays only at Masses with a celebratory character.¹⁹ The *Kyrie*, which more or less immediately follows the processional, is always much slower than most other songs. This contrast works to emphasize the entry into the first solemn part of the Mass. The ritual's supplicatory character is highlighted by the measured cadence. Because Shaïda chooses the Offertory song to suit predominantly the character of the Mass instead of the character of the rite itself, it is the song which varies most in tempo and best serves to set the overall mood of a Mass. The *Sanctus* is always the most upbeat and quick-paced song, as it is understood to demonstrate the thankful

¹⁹ Even the processional normally played at funerals, "*Ils revivront*," is played at a tempo of 120 beats per minute, quarter notes equaling one beat, because it is understood as a celebration both of the person's life and of God's reception of this person in His presence.

exuberance of the sinner towards his / her munificent Creator. The Communion hymn is normally slow in order to invite meditation, while the recessional is always lively, at times even vigorous. Curiously, while the group is careful to set the tempo of the processional to a slow march, no such care is taken for the recessional, which at times would invite the audience to jog briskly. This song is perceived as the sending forth of the community (a liturgically correct interpretation) by the members, who hope to invigorate the assembly by their energy and make their day brighter.

Within the songs themselves, the band makes use of different tempos for various reasons, the most common being the melding of the old and the new styles; a number of traditional songs in the band's repertoire start off slowly, in imitation of their 'original' style, and are then sped up, energized, and sometimes even keyed up to underscore the vitality and vigour of the song. Another use of differing degrees of speed within a song is for emphasis on key elements in a song – a poignant chorus (as in Jacques' rendition of *Quatre-vingt-huit*) or the main strophe in a psalm. Rubato is used by the musicians to signal the beginning or end of a section or a song, while ritardando is employed to mark the last line of the final verse in a song. Prompted by the lead singers by a nod to the lead musicians, this device ensures that the song will end more or less in unison, avoiding the embarrassing false start which was common when the group was first formed. This also reassures the audience by signalling the end of a song, allowing them to sing comfortably and confidently in the knowledge that they will be forewarned, and acts as closure.

Ritardando is not only a useful way of signalling the end of a song, but is also a source of playful fun to entertain the congregation. Ritardando was first used in the

recessional song *Baruch-Attah*. Because of its Jewish air, the song sounded bizarre to the musicians (the strong beats occur in unusual places to a Western ear), who were unable to replicate the exotic sway of the original. In order to cope with this foreign-sounding song, the musicians sped it up and used a very repetitive bass line and drum beat, reminiscent of a brisk polka. The fast tempo made the song impossible to end on a sustained note in unison, so the musicians used an elongated ritardando concluded with a combination drum roll/strummed chord. Referred to as “the train effect,” this ritardando progressively became increasingly drawn out, and came to be a source of laughter for the band, who, treating it like a rock band’s grandest of finales, would refer to it as “Like Sideshow Bob stepping on the rakes” (an expression taken from a seemingly interminable scene in “The Simpsons”) or by holding their knees with a mock look of pain while sounding out Peter Griffin’s “Uffft!...aaahhh! Uffft!...aaahhh!” (another seemingly interminable scene, from “The Family Guy”). The performance could last for over one minute, making the parishioners smirk, frown, and laugh uncomfortably, unsure of how to react.

In terms of chords and keys, most guitarists in Shaïda are familiar with and are able to form, in basic first position, all the major chords except B and F, which are ‘cheated’ by omitting the bass and playing only the four or five highest strings. The three most common minor chords (Em, Am, and Dm) and the four most common seventh chords (A7, B7, D7, and G7) are in the chord repertoires of all of Shaïda’s guitarists. All other chords fall into a different category and are generally avoided whenever possible. For this reason, when a new song is proposed by the person intending to be its main vocalist, Alvin will invariably direct the singer by strumming a C chord, and the singer

will adapt his/her singing to it. If the key proves to be slightly out of the singer's range, a capo may be used to sharpen the pitch. If the difference between the singer's register and the key of C is more than four semi-tones, Alvin will normally try a different key, normally D or G, and adjusting with a capo afterwards. Aside from ensuring that the other guitarists will be able to form most of the chords, this makes the basic guitar chord progressions easier to learn.

The practice of basing songs on the simpler chord patterns learned by ear through oral dissemination has a number of consequences as pertains to chords played. Firstly, it inevitably alters, sometimes even transforms, the songs because of the inevitable misunderstandings, false representations, and freedom of interpretation brought about by the oral sharing of such knowledge. Embellished and special chords (suspended, diminished or augmented) are normally replaced by either natural major chords or whatever passes as 'sounding about right,' so are only very rarely used. Because the original songs are sometimes so musically impoverished through the exclusion of these special chords, the band often feels the need to compensate with other textures such as vocal harmonies, chords played in the second and third positions, descants, and bass lines. Another significant impact of the oral transmission of songs is that major chords (three-tone) are often replaced by the simpler two-tone power chords, which results in the need to distort the sound in order to enrich it.

The chords used by Shaïda are what one might expect from any typical amateur youth band playing rock music in Canada. Using mostly major chords, most songs are straight-forward and simple. Minor chords are used to lend a sense of pathos whenever

such sentiment is called for. Other standards are sevenths and suspended chords, which help diversify. Key schemes are based primarily on what can most easily be played on guitar at the first position; most songs tend to be set in the keys of G, C, D, A, or E. Whenever B chords or any of the various flats and sharps are called for, a capo is normally used instead of a transposition.

Six of the ten songs on the *Psaumes et Prières* recording (Appendix I) are in minor keys, which is representative of the repertoire. The rites with a supplicatory or repentant character tend to be much more prominent in a Roman Catholic Mass (see Chapter 5), and, when sung and/or played, are generally set in minor keys, which are associated with a contemplative, sad, or repentant feeling in the Western World. Typically, in a Roman Catholic Mass, the Kyrie, the Our Father, and the Eucharist are in minor tonalities, while major tonalities are primarily reserved for the rites with the most celebratory character (the procession, the Alleluia, and the recession). Shaïda mostly respects the traditional tendency of tonality in the Mass, which fosters an ability for parishioners (and non-parishioners, to a different extent) to identify with the order, mood and purpose of each part of the mass. Therefore, in the instance of breaking this tendency, such as the Alleluia written for the funeral (*Soixante-trois*) in the key of A minor, and the eighty-eighth psalm (*Quatre-vingt-huit*, set to music by Brian) impacts the listeners in a specific way, that they may not be able to articulate.

One can generally identify a Catholic song because of such elements as simple melodies and predictable patterns, call-response form, modes/keys, often minor, and chord progressions, which often end unresolved to lead into next section of the Mass.

Shaïda adds their own characteristics to this mix, by keeping often simple melodies for example, respecting the order of the mass and major/minor tendencies. With a melody, the singers add their typical characteristic harmony lines, jazz it up with finger snaps (as in *Cent-dix-sept* on CD [see Appendix I]) and singing on the off-beats. The instrumentalists create their accompaniment with chords of their choice, which might include 7ths and 9ths on chords typically found in their simple form when accompanied in a traditional manner.

Harmonic rhythm for most of Shaïda's active repertoire is set at regular intervals, although a number of songs have been much influenced by Nathaël and Martin's aesthetics, whose grasp of off beats, unusual meters, and seemingly sporadic accents has been much influence by their appreciation for and emulation of pop music and the local 'Math Rock' scene.²⁰ Commercially successful 'Industrial Music' bands such as 'Primus,' 'Nine Inch Nails' and 'Buckethead,' as well as a number of local jam bands, which account for much of Nathaël and Martin's music culture, play on time signatures and beats virtually unknown to the Western ear. Nathaël explains that ever since he started being serious about playing the drums, the 'Nine Inch Nails' songs, such as *Mr. Self-Destruct* and *Heresy* have been an important part of his music culture. The musicians introduce these interesting time elements in a number of Shaïda's songs, playfully inserting drum beats and bass lines from their favourite bands. This practice sometimes throws the singers off balance, but the band judges the overall effect worth the risk. Few

²⁰ Eric Babineau, Shaïda's first long-term bassist, is presently Nathaël's housemate and a prolific 'Math Rock' songwriter.

parishioners have the ear to properly appreciate the rhythm, however, so songs which incorporate these elements are often met with puzzled or disapproving expressions from the assembly.

Musical Technique

Since most members of Shaïda had never played or sang with a group, expectations about pitch, quality, and accuracy of cut offs are low, especially because this lack of experience is compounded with a self-taught technique gleaned from popular music (as opposed to professionally or classically trained vocalists). As a group, Shaïda is not concerned about accuracy of pitch; individual accuracy is not a priority, and collective accuracy is not an objective. Synchronized diphthongs are rare, and very seldom is the idea of directly establishing a cut in a phrase proposed.²¹ Accuracy of cut offs is not consciously worked on either. Because, unlike the majority of choirs, the musical director does not direct while they rehearse or perform, vocal cut offs are ad hoc and typically initiated by an eye contact or a sideways glance between singers. The musicians operate in much the same manner, and typically rely on Alvin to give a visual signal (a nod, a glance or a foot kicked up) or Nathaël to indicate the cut off with a rubato or a ritardando

²¹ The harmonies on the songs on the "Psaumes & Prieres" album, which were rehearsed multiple times prior to its recording, for instance, seldom matched up with the lead singers' diphthongs. This could have been resolved by a simple five-minute repetition of the words, but was not considered important enough. The final product is a strange but somehow appealing resonance, with an enchanting quality.

(detailed later). Despite being unprofessional, the youths normally cut off in sync because of the musical unity the group has established.

While their cut offs are quite consistent in spite of their off the cuff nature, maintaining a tone with intensity through its full value is erratic in practice. As the group relies heavily on the imitation of oral example instead of visual indication, the weaker singers typically trail off long before the others. Because of their call-and-response form, this issue is of no consequence for most psalms and prayers. The lead will typically endeavour to set a pattern which the others will try to emulate. When the *Notre Pere* is performed, for instance, Mélane, whose technique is better developed than that of the others, sets the duration by her example, and the others reproduce her sound as best they can.

With no formal voice training, any development of breath support and control abilities is self-taught. Most singers in Shaïda have learned how to support their tone through imitation of the older members, yet this has proven to be a poor replacement for professional guidance. To the ear, a supported tone does not necessarily translate to which muscles and technique to use; support from the diaphragm does not come naturally to adult speakers. Further influencing the sound produced is the influence of popular music. As opposed to formal vocal training, learning informally through the imitation of popular music easily translates into a nasal tone or the use of throat or head voice. To further compound the issue is the members' conscious and unconscious attempts to emulate their favourite styles. As Jérémie's appreciation for bluegrass translates into a nasal tone, Jacques' pop rock aesthetics lead him to use a soft throat voice. Significantly, these

differences are perceived as strong suits by the band. In-group teasing occurs frequently as singers become known for their needs. Jérémie, whose voice is not quite an octave lower in pitch than Amélie and Mélane, is often teased for consistently needing a capo placed on the third fret. This occurs primarily because Jérémie seldom proposes songs himself to the band, the great majority of “free songs” (songs considered to be no one’s specific property) are led by Amélie and Mélane, resulting in the pitch typically being set for their voices.

The musicians, who, like the singers, are self-taught in the popular music style (I being the sole exception), have also been much influenced by the pop music aesthetic. This is apparent in Alvin’s, Catherine’s and Jonathan’s (the guitarists) strumming patterns and choice of time signatures, in Martin’s (the bassist) thumb-slapping and snapping of the lower strings and his choice of melodic progression, and in Nathaël’s use of rock and pop drum beats. Shaïda’s musicians make no attempt to dissimulate the influence of popular music, and strands of bluegrass, Acadian, jazz, classic rock, country, metal and alternative are clearly heard in the texture of the songs. The influence of popular music is strong even when the band is performing traditional Roman Catholic sacred music, as most of the musicians have never heard the originals, and therefore must rely on their existing repertoire and conceptions to play.

This freedom, which is brought about by playing in an unspecified popular style, is enjoyed by the musicians. Justin explains his interpretation of what happens when a song is put together:

I think we all kind of add our own twist to it. Somebody plays it one way, and you know, I might throw in something a little different - that's kind of my own take [on the song]. I think we all kind of bring out what we all kind of have in us, that we really want to play (JP-1).

Martin, who appreciates the freedom he is allowed as a bassist, states: "We can bend. We can improvise things; we have a certain liberty of creation in that" (MS-I2). The singers in the group welcome gladly this everything goes approach: "The fact that they can just come and improvise, and make us sound good. And they have fun with that. At the same time, if it can bring them to church, it's cool" (AC-I4). Creativity is highly valued by the musicians. During both rehearsals and performances, displays of originality and ingenuity are executed for the other instrumentalists. Playful runs on the bass, for instance, are not expected to be noticed by anyone but the drummer and the rhythm guitarists, but will nonetheless rarely go without an encouraging comment such as: "Wow. I liked what you did there, that little ba-dah-ba-dah" (NM-*during a performance*).

A general lack of precision is present in most of Shaïda's playing. Since songs are only rehearsed a few times before they are performed, members feel that it is reasonable of them to settle for "good enough," as they normally say once a song is considered ready for presentation. The standard is set low for a number of reasons: lack of perfectionism, lack of training, the frequent turnover of members, inconsistent attendance (which results in a lack of predictability in who will show up on a given Sunday), the young age of the members, the busy lifestyle of most, and the fact that they are unpaid. These are all important factors which the group takes into consideration. Moreover, because the quality of musicality is not valued as highly as the quality of the experience, a lack of precision is not perceived as serious or deleterious. Lastly, this lack of precision, which is often

brought about partly by the bassist's slapping his strings and the guitarists' consecutive downward strumming, is at times a desired feature in the group's music making.

The Decision to Compose Songs

Writing songs is a relatively recent practice for Shaïda. Exasperated at being unable to find a song suitable for the Pentecost Mass one year (2003), and unable to musically readapt any of the existing songs because of their simplistic structure, the band resolved to put music to an existing text. A leafing through the various Lenten and Easter prayer booklets produced a text whose colour of language, structure, and style were deemed appropriate, and the band worked to find an adequate way to put it to music. Jacques finally agreed to work on the text at home, and produced a song which is still amongst the band members' favourites. Though the members were very pleased with their creation, no other song was written for almost a year.

Following the success of Jacques' *Prière à l'Esprit Saint*, the band began discussing the possibility of producing an album of its own. This was perceived as a mammoth undertaking, and only after a dozen discussions about the project was the idea finally accepted by the majority of the members. In view of the upcoming production of this album, it was decided that the band should begin actively trying to compose its own songs. This proved to be a difficult task. The youths felt unable to produce a theologically sound text for use in the Mass, and they were opposed to readapting the music from an existing piece because of legal concerns and their feeling that it was important for them to

“own” the piece. For this reason, the youths eventually became discouraged, and the project was put off indefinitely.

No further songs were composed until some members began to stress the importance of perfectly following the Roman Church’s liturgical calendar. These members argued that the psalm selected by the Church for any given celebration is intimately connected to the day’s readings, and that performing even a relatively suitable song was a poor substitute and betrayed an imperfect preparation and an unwillingness to adapt. The band began to put its own music to the psalms. Since the members of Shaïda rehearse once (if at all) before a performance and since the rehearsals are already very demanding, the entire song writing process (which includes selection of chord and strumming patterns, composition of melody, direction of musical accompaniment and the adaptation of the text) was normally limited to less than ten minutes – and often to less time than it took to perform the piece. Because of the rushed manner in which these songs were brought into being, the resulting product was rough and unpolished. In addition, because so little energy was invested in their creation, few members became attached to the songs. For these reasons, these psalms were considered to be musically sub-par and were never added to the band’s repertoire.

In 2003, Shaïda was asked to play at the funeral of four tragically killed teenagers of the parish unity in support of their families. This was a momentous occasion not only in terms of the group’s coming together and realizing its mission and purpose (see Chapter 4), but also in terms of music composition. Less than one hour before the funeral, the youths realized that no Alleluia in their repertoire was appropriate for the occasion.

Knowing that his music culture and (non-sacred) repertoire was almost exclusively made up of depressing Seattle grunge (see Chapter 2), Brian was called upon to suggest an appropriate beat and melody for the occasion. Within fifteen minutes, the band had prepared a fully workable song, and though it hardly took longer to prepare than the psalms the group considered so mediocre, so much care, emotion and careful consideration went into the composition and the subsequent tailoring of the musical accompaniment that the song directly became part of the active repertoire of the group.

With the addition of this Alleluia to the group's active repertoire, the need for Shaïda to write its own songs because of its distinct sound and to possess its own repertoire for purposes of radio play, recording, and authenticity, was felt all the more intently. Certain members began to create a quantity of original compositions. Common sources of inspiration for the lyrics were the weekly psalms and collections of prayers from the Church Fathers bought at the Archbishopric library, while the music was normally created in the course of an unregimented rehearsal session. From this point on, song writing began to be perceived as more accessible. At present, most of the band members have been involved in either the lyrical or musical composition of at least a few songs, although certain members have been more prolific than others.

Although the band has written a number of songs, song composition is still considered secondary to the performance of a varied repertoire (cf. Narváez 1995: 170); for this reason, although most members report preferring to play those songs composed by the band, these do not enjoy more play than other material. However, Lina voices the opinion of a number of members when she lists her favourite songs: "I like the one from

Brian and Mélane. I really like that one. It's really powerful. The one with Saint Francis of Assisi is really beautiful. I like that one. It's a really nice song for youths. It makes you think more" (LR-I). Because many of the songs written by the band have been based on texts from traditional prayers and the 150 psalms rather than on the proposed texts to accompany the various rites, however, they are difficult to integrate in the structure of the Mass, and are therefore played less often.

Song re-interpretation is also an important element to consider. If it is accurate to conclude that "texts are products of socially, politically, and historically constituted processes of discourse production and reception" (Briggs 1993: 420), and that "[e]very song in a singer's repertoire is in some way a local song, no matter what its content or source" (Casey, Rosenberg and Wareham 1972: 397), this is especially true in the case of Shaïda. Here, sound and content are reinterpreted by a gamut of musicians with different backgrounds and aesthetics with a very clear purpose: to make music for youth to learn to better appreciate the Roman Mass. Most commonly, songs are musically re-interpreted on the spot, while their lyrics are modified and changed over time. Since this process never really stops occurring, especially because of the constantly evolving nature of the band's membership, a number of songs in the band's repertoire have been altered so often that they are difficult to recognize both musically and lyrically.

Selecting Appropriate Texts: Diverse Perspectives

From this point on, certain members of the band began actively composing songs to be performed by Shaïda during Mass. Because of the difficulties posed by the lack of theological training, however, most of these compositions were re-adaptations of psalms taken from the *Prions en Eglise* (the weekly missal published by Novalis). The most common source for texts is the Book of Psalms. This is not surprising, as the parish of Cocagne (and the Roman Catholic Church as a whole) has long promoted the singing of the psalms. Further, because the liturgical calendar proposes a different one every week, the need to have a varied repertoire of psalms is multiplied. Significantly, these psalms are not taken from the Bible, but rather from the *Prions en Eglise*. This has some important implications. Firstly, because the Bible itself is never used as a resource (and because the youths have never gotten accustomed to using it), the other books it contains are never consulted for ideas.²² Secondly, the *Prions en Eglise* presents sections of psalms already adapted in verse form; this means that Shaïda's versions of the psalms are not only similar in content to that of the weekly missal, but also that the main exhortation in the chorus (which is normally not a line in the psalm but rather a concise rendering of the message the Church wishes to highlight) is in lien with the weekly readings. Lastly, because the *Prions en Eglise* is published in Quebec, the language and the colour of the language used in it are very different from that which would be borrowed by a member of

²² This reluctance to depend on the Bible for song texts is likely also a product of the youths' concept of the Bible as both a Sacred Text and a Sacred Thing, *and therefore unalterable*.

Shaïda who would by directly referring to her or his Bible de Jerusalem, the translation which most of the members own.

Adrien, Donia and I scoured the shelves of the Archdiocese's bookstore, and purchased a number of bound collections of prayers which the band could borrow from to compose their songs. These included prayers from the Church Fathers, prayers for special occasions, and collections of the most popular prayers in the world, from various faiths. Most of these books were very helpful in helping the writers choose appropriate material. Texts from the Church Fathers are the favourite non-biblical source of inspiration for song writers. These texts range from prayers to selections from sermons to exhortations, and typically are already condensed to what is considered their essence. In these published works, texts are translated in French from Latin, but typically in a style which the members consider at once liturgically adequate and somewhat archaic (and therefore touching the mystical [see Chapter 3]). However, because the majority of these books are (poor) translations of prayers in Latin, the meter is persistently off and the choice of vocabulary is often mediocre at best. For this reason, most of the prayers undergo such drastic changes when being adapted to song that they are barely recognizable from even their French translations.

The members who have written or re-written texts for Shaïda to perform as songs have very different views on what can or should be altered in a text. However, though Shaïda's three principal producers of texts for songs are motivated by different reasons and have very different ideas about what can and what can not be altered, there seem to

be certain commonalities in the choice of what is kept and what is freely abandoned in texts borrowed from other sources, as well as the choice of text which is selected.

Jacques, who would be identified by folklorist Eleanor Long as the most *perseverating* of performers because of his insistence on the faithful reproduction of the text, is very uncomfortable altering the text of a psalm, prayer, or even an existing song (Long 1973: 232). When texts count too many lines, when lines count the wrong number of syllables, and when words appear in an unsuitable or difficult place in the melody line, Jacques remains resolute, and determinedly changes the music to fit the text. Though the group respects his judgment regarding musical issues, some question his way of working the music around the text. Suggestions are often made regarding the replacement of certain words, or the omission or moving of a certain line in the text in order to yield a 'better song,' but Jacques has remained firm. Despite having been informed of the grammatical error printed on his lyric sheet for *Prière de Saint-François*, for instance, Jacques repeats the error consistently in performance, and even on the CD (Appendix I), despite being repeatedly reminded (the singularization of "ténèbres"). Another example is Jacques' denial of my request to replace the word "alliance" with a more contextually appropriate and musically fitting word in a song I myself had written (*Quatre-vingt-huit*).

Mélane is Jacques' opposite as a folk artist; a confabulator, she feels free to manipulate, alter, and revise the texts in hand. Not overly concerned with meaning, Melane readily adds or drops whole lines in order to better suit what she perceives as the needs of the song. Unlike Long's confabulators, however, Mélane is not motivated to do so by a desire to improve the text or its meaning. Nor is she concerned with liturgical or

social appropriateness. Instead, she confabulates in order to simplify and strengthen the actual performance (the singing) of the song – which she does brilliantly. Mélane’s various omissions and substitutions have an important impact on the meaning of the text. For instance, the sixty-third psalm, which I had readapted in verse form for Shaïda’s album, was given a new spin by Mélane’s omissions and adaptations. The last line of the first verse originally denotes a soul’s thirst for the presence of God. However, Mélane’s omission of the last half of the line (“on dry ground”) suggests instead a body resolved to die. This is an example of possible consequences when subtleties of biblical texts are not fully appreciated: instead of a song of trust in a God who justifies his faithful in the eyes of the World, Shaïda’s adaptation is a very carnal love song between God and the psalmist on his death bed. Though drastically altering the meaning, purpose, and atmosphere of the song, the changes were accepted without hesitation by the group (I was quite pleased with them myself). The remainder of Long’s definition of the confabulator is an excellent description of Mélane’s song writing style “usually no more committed to their own revisions than they are to their models,” Long writes, “their creativity is expressed primarily in style rather than content, drama rather than coherence, and fancy (in the Coleridgean sense) rather than imagination” (Long 1973: 233).

As a song writer, I identify myself as a rationalizing artist. While I feel fairly free to manipulate the material with which I am presented, I do have very serious misgivings about altering the original texture, context or ambience of a text (unless this is the clear purpose of the re-writing [my first attempt at a re-write for Shaïda was ‘Nirvana’s “Jesus Don’t Want Me for a Sunbeam”’]). As a rationalizing folk artist, my manipulations are

“guided by an independent principle,” as I am “first and always oriented to a thesis” (Long 1973: 233). This thesis is the idea that if the Sacraments, the Church and the Mass as a ritual are presented fairly, in a theologically sound manner, those present to their ministrations will inevitably be stirred to a better, deeper understanding of the Roman Catholic faith, the Church, and Mankind’s divine foundation and purpose.²³ In my reworking of Saint Pacôme’s “*Ne reste pas avec les morts*” (which was recorded on Shaïda’s album with the title “*Debout*”), for instance, I was very careful to preserve as much of the original text as possible, and to present the prayer as it was initially written. My alterations (ignoring the omissions) were mostly regarding the choice of emphases, the nature of the vocabulary, and the timing of certain elements, while I sought to keep intact the signification of the wording and the ambiance of the text. Though few have demonstrated concern about the need to adhere to strictly Roman Catholic theology, key songwriters and adult leaders of the group consult with me in order to verify the Catholicity of songs (avoiding delicate situations regarding appropriateness as discussed in Chapter 1).

²³ I feel it is necessary at this juncture to stress that though this is my primary thought process, my motivation in guiding the group’s philosophical direction and my hope for the future of the band, the parish, and myself, I am including this reflection solely to account for my personal reason for being involved, and not as a statement of fact.

Composition as Process

"Do that again! That thing you just did," exclaims Adrien. Martin is confused. "What?" "What you were just doing. It's perfect for the psalm." Martin's confusion is replaced by scepticism: "But it's just some Radiohead," he retorts. "It doesn't matter what it is, it'll work," Adrien explains. The group, who had been discussing the need to write new music for the next week's psalm, now listens absorbedly to Martin's playing. Adrien turns to Jacques and tells him to "figure something out for that." Jacques picks up Alvin's guitar and strums the same chords as Martin. He hums to himself, trying to find an appropriate melody for the simple 3-chord progression while Nathaël marks the pace with the bass drum.

Since the words of the next week's psalm are already in verse form, Jacques directly transposes them to the music. Although the text is a difficult fit to the chord progression being played, Jacques moulds it, re-arranges it and astutely carves the syllables so as to fit the music. After about five minutes of false starts and countless timing problems, Amélie suggests that the band simply drop the third and fourth verses, in which most of the problems occur. Once this has been ratified by one of the group's theological advisors, who are informally recognized as having a deeper understanding in matters of Catholicity (this includes Adrien, Alvin, and myself), the three remaining verses are quickly scanned for timing problems.

Satisfied with the contents of the song, Jacques teaches the new piece to the other singers. While this is being done, Jesse, the lead guitarist, endeavours to find tonal

equivalents or enharmonic alternative to the chords Martin is continually playing and re-playing for the singers' benefit. Confident that the singers can at least follow the basic outline of the tune, Jacques turns to Mélane, who, with Amélie, set out to give the song texture by adding in harmonies. After a few seconds of trial and error, they are satisfied with the sound and ask Lina and Jessica to follow their lead.

Approximately twenty minutes have elapsed from the time Adrien noticed Martin's playing, and by this time, most of the band members are confident enough to perform it live. Sensing that the musicians are becoming restless, Amélie suggests that the group should move on to practicing next song which will be performed in the following week's Mass. At Nathaël's request, the song is repeated one last time before going on to the next, so that he may have a feel for the song's beginning and end.

Shaïda's song composition and interpretation is, as most any song composition, "a process characterized by a melding of conventional as well as innovative elements, many of which have been learned from others in the collective musical culture of one's upbringing and development" (Narváez 1995: 171). "Shaïdanization" is how the members of the band call the process of readapting a new song for play by the group. The "Shaïdanizing" of a song for use in the liturgy is a delicate matter. Normally, the process is quite fast, with the ensemble learning a new song in one rehearsal, and performing it for a Mass the very next time they meet.

Songs are typically learned informally and unceremoniously. New songs are usually proposed by the person who intends to be the song's lead singer. Often, the biggest challenge met by the person proposing the song is to encourage the band to take it seriously – much of what is first brought to the table is considered very “corny” and therefore must be proposed in such a way as to convince the others that Shaïda will manage to eliminate the “corny” aspects (see Chapter 4). The advocate for the new song will first make the band listen to the song, either by playing a recorded version of it on the church's PA system, or more commonly, by simply singing a few bars of the song. When this is done, the person suggesting the song will guide the others' listening of it by pointing out details he or she wishes Shaïda to reproduce.

After the band has heard enough of the song to get an idea about how it is constructed, the process of ownership is immediately initiated. Alvin typically attempts to play it on guitar, using the key suggested by the singer. At this juncture, the musicians and singers informally form small sub-groups. The rhythm guitarists will normally band together, the lead guitarist, bassist and drummer normally form a second sub-group, and while the lead singers huddle together to discuss form, harmonies and pitch, the backup singers wait patiently for the process to be done. These sub-groups thrash out how their own group should perform the song, highlighting the important elements of the song, the potential pitfalls which might make some parts problematic, and the special touches they may want to work on.

The four chief informal sub-groups often work in opposition to each other; the rhythm guitarists will typically attempt to rationalize the song, fix its form, and keep the

structure simple, while the bassist, lead guitarist, and drummer will normally try to incorporate textures, polyphonies, off tempos and the like to make the song “more interesting” (see Appendix III: 9). “Sometimes I try to sneak in something like Primus, because I’m playing bass, but sometimes, it’s a little bit of Tori Amos” (MS-I3), Martin explains. While the song is being rearranged by the musicians, the lead singers (typically Amélie, Mélane and Jacques) normally try to think up good harmonies which will add texture to the song. As this happens, the band is guided by both the singer who suggested it and Adrien, whose attempts at getting the quieter members to participate in the process are out-and-out apparent. The next few minutes are chaotic, with most of the musicians trying to imagine what the song could sound like when performed by Shaïda. Even when the song is learned from a recording, the musicians rarely pay attention to anything but the melody and the basic beat and chord patterns. Ray Allen’s comments on the communal nature of song composition and reinterpretation in New York City’s gospel quartets are fitting: “While the song writing process is not without its tensions, the final song arrangement represents a fascinating balance of individual and communal concerns” (Allen 1991: 58).

Repertoire Proprietorship Issues

Adrien still makes the final decisions about song selection, based on who will be available to sing, to play and to work the equipment, who will preside at Mass, and the makeup of the audience expected to be present. He is also very careful to take special care

in considering the wishes of the performers. The youths at times omit certain pieces for upcoming performances if the person who “owns” the song in question is foreseen to be absent. This “ownership” of material is typical to most folk groups. Casey, Rosenberg and Wareham explain that

when a song is referred to as ‘Jack’s song,’ it means that the song has been learned from Jack or that the song is an active one in Jack’s repertoire. In either case it indicates the awareness that every singer is possessive about his repertoire (Casey, Rosenberg and Wareham 1972: 401).

Mercédès Pavlicevic explains that to “own” a piece of music is to possess it in an emotional sense (Pavlicevic 2003: 70).

The process of becoming an “owner” of a song is complex. Firstly, the person who brings the song to the attention of the group is normally considered to “have dibs” on it. Anyone who composes or significantly alters an existing composition is considered to have control over the piece; out of respect for the person involved, moreover, songs are rarely re-altered. Performance can also result in a person’s ownership of a song; Ray Allen explains:

Part of personalizing a song is to sing with such compelling emotion and intensity that the congregation believes the singer sincerely knows what the song is about; that she or he has truly experienced the message and can therefore convey a genuine feeling about it to others (Allen 1991, 146-7).

The members of the band are always very careful and also very aware about who “owns” which song and in which ways. Although it is seldom discussed outright, this is intimated by the manner in which members fail to “think of” certain songs whenever their owners are absent, coupled with an uncomfortable hesitation whenever their “owners” fail to appear to a performance after the songs have been rehearsed.

A key reason why members recognize the importance of ownership is linked to performance. Kenneth Goldstein remarks that particular songs in a singer's [band's] repertoire move from active to passive status and vice versa in response to specific factors (Goldstein 1971). Foley, criticizing how this can impact the choice of material to the detriment of the liturgical calendar, reasons why song selection, and, by extension, song ownership, takes place:

Every successful performer knows that it is important to select material that will most effectively showcase their talents. You select the key that flatters your range with a tessitura that shows off your voice, couched in an arrangement that complements your back-up singers. And unless you want to rest on your musical laurels, you are constantly in search of fresh and distinctive material (Foley 1991: 88).

Foley explains that this can negatively affect song selection:

To the extent that the taste of the music group becomes the dominant criteria for selecting worship music, or to the extent that the need to find materials to showcase the group's talents become the dominant criterion for selecting music, then to that same extent have we moved out of liturgy and into the concert business (Foley 1991: 89).

In the case of Shaïda, this generally is not understood as posing a problem to the liturgical calendar nor to the Order of Mass, since there is a sufficient number of performers and a broad enough repertoire to ensure an adequate selection.

The Role of the Audience in Repertoire Selection

Since "[a] group's image of itself and its images of other groups are reflected in its folklore repertoire" (Jansen 1959: 205), members of the band are very aware of the importance of assuring their repertoire is considered to be fitting to the Mass, the liturgical calendar, sacred sound, and the expected "look" of church musicians by their

audience. For the same reason, members are concerned with how these elements function to secure their standing in the band and their own perception of their importance to the group. Thus, the content and sound of Shaïda's repertoire is determined by Shaïda's interpretation of audience expectation, by members' perception of what other members value as performatively competent (see Chapter 7), and by their own ideas about belonging, contribution and competence.

Direct and instantaneous audience feedback is of great consequence to each of Shaïda's performances. Casey, Rosenberg and Wareham explain how musicians tailor their repertoire as well as their sound in accordance to the public's tastes:

A singer interacts with his audiences in the same way that a politician interacts with parts or all of his constituency. The 'good' singer is aware of the likes and dislikes of the groups and individuals for whom he performs. He manipulates his repertoire in response to perceived or anticipated performances, giving his constituents what he thinks they would like to hear. He is more or less sensitive to their feedback and thus quick to react in situations in which either his or their expectations are not fulfilled (1972: 397).

The active repertoire of the band is not only dependent on the function of the playing, the context, and the physical location, but is also selected in terms of the audience present:

When a 'good' singer performs regularly before more than one audience, he develops an awareness of the differences between the groups for whom he performs. He accordingly tailors his performance to fit what he perceives as the special tastes of particular audiences. This tailoring is often done in terms of repertoire selection (Casey, Rosenberg and Wareham 1972: 400).

It would be easy to presume that in the case of Shaïda's performance at Mass, audience feedback does not (or could not) directly influence repertoire choice because the material is pre-selected more than a week in advance and is set to the festivities of the day. However, this is certainly not the case. Immediate audience reaction plays a significant role in the choice of material played, the length, and the lyric content of songs during

most performances, as do various other elements which compel the negotiation of up-to-the-minute adjustments by the group.

Duration of songs is by far the element which most commonly is adjusted because of the audience's feedback. Extra verses or melodic breaks will often be added in order to lengthen songs so that they coincide with the varying length of certain rituals (a most obvious example is the much-differing length of Communion). Songs may also be lengthened if the band senses the crowd is very responsive and would enjoy or benefit from a longer rendition. Contrarily, some songs may be shortened by the band because they feel the audience is unenthusiastic or critical about the choice, because of the length of the Mass, or because members of Shaïda feel the audience may perceive their performance of a certain piece as musically mediocre. When the youths begin to feel that the Mass is getting exceedingly long, they may even elect to completely omit the particular songs which they consider non-compulsory (such as the *Pater noster* or the *Agnus Dei*).

The adding-on of unforeseen parts of the Mass (such as an unexpected baptism at Easter) often compels the group to immediately select, mentally rehearse, and perform songs which were not part of the set list. Other songs may be added to the performance when rites last longer than the song which was pre-selected for it can be agreeably lengthened. Although Communion regularly poses this problem, a momentous example of this was during a Confirmation Rite by the Archbishop in St. Antoine. While Shaïda had only prepared one song for the occasion, the Bishop took the time to individually address each of the seventy youths present; when Shaïda judged the song to be too repetitive after

five minutes, the band members began to feel the need to add more songs on the spot, and subsequently added eight songs which were deemed theologically relevant, musically appropriate, and lengthy enough to allow for the band to get in the groove of the unrehearsed piece before it ended.

The song repertoire of the band can easily be divided into a great many categories, and can be understood as in fact consisting of a number of sub-repertoires. The most obvious classification approach in this case is to analyse the situational context. Through observation and participation, I have distinguished between five different circumstances where clear differences are immediately apparent. These categories are at times fluid, fluctuating and blurring the boundaries between each other, and at other times they are fixed, with clear distinct boundaries. Although this thesis is only concerned with one of these repertoires (sacred music played in the context participation in the liturgy), it is essential to at least summarily examine the three other contexts, as they strongly influence the approach of the band, their choice of music, as well as their overall sound in the context of the Mass.

Situational Contexts for Music Making

A rehearsal in Cocagne.

Jacques, third to arrive at the rehearsal, plays his new composition, accompanying himself on his own guitar. He makes a complete run through, and as

youths make their way into the church silently greeting each other, they form a circle around the singer. Adrien turns towards me and quietly asks my approval. I indicate my agreement, and he seems content with my response. When Jacques finishes his song, he looks at Alvin with a questioning look, seeking input. At Adrien's request, Jacques starts the song once more, and Adrien asks me to listen to the words. He is hoping I will make the song tighter by fixing the few extended syllables. He is also asking whether this particular song is appropriate as a Gloria. Aside from a few pronunciation errors occasioned by the use of Chiac in the stead of French, the song is well enunciated and I find the phrasing quite good.

"Are you going to the store?" Alvin asks Jacques' mother. "I need a shoelace for my guitar strap." "Oh they have that here?" Adrien takes advantage of the occasion to ask for a bottle of water. Martin arrives, and the conversation turns to his new dreadlocks and the few parties he is organizing this summer. We discuss the details for the upcoming parties, including designated drivers and the bands being invited. Martin plugs in his bass, and plays "Superman's Dead" from Our Lady Peace. Jacques joins in with his guitar, but before they get to the chorus, Adrien asks Jacques to play his new musical composition. I remark that it sounds like R.E.M.'s "Everybody Hurts." He immediately starts playing it, and soon enough all those present are involved in the playing. When the song is done, Martin asks Jacques if he knows how to play the Red Hot Chilly Peppers' "Under the Bridge," but to no avail.

When Martin himself asks for requests, he is asked to play a Nine Inch Nails song. He is stumped. Although he is presently wearing a T-shirt which proudly announces his

fandom, he is unable to think of a single bass line he is able to play. "It's for listening to, not learning," Martin responds. Jacques and Alvin play Blue Rodeo's "Try." After missing a chord, Jacques interrupts his playing, takes a sip of water, and excuses himself: "I have the chords written down somewhere." Jesse strums the opening chords to Radiohead's "Creep," but Adrien interrupts the jam session to get Jacques to play his new composition a third time. When the band begins playing, Martin stops in mid-note to tell Jacques that he's out of tune. Jacques re-tunes his guitar, and Martin explains that the probable reason the guitar is "so off" is that Jacques is using a capo. The song is played once more, with Jesse, Catherine and Martin following the chord progression attentively. Jesse, having understood the chord progression, adds texture with a slightly altered strumming pattern. Catherine analyses the timing, and from the very first time she hear the song, begins to talk about various sections by their chord progression.

Mélane arrives and apologizes for being late. "I was walking my dog and I was like: 'Oh! Shaïda!'" So that she can come up with a harmony for the song, Adrien asks Jacques to play it once again. Martin, Jesse and Catherine, having memorized the song, work on its texture. Mélane is content with her ideas about harmonies. "Sebastien, listen to this Gloria, and tell us what we should change." Jacques and Mélane play me a Gloria we had worked on but abandoned three months prior. "Gloire a Dieu, Gloire a Dieu et paix sur la terre aux hommes qu'Il aime," they begin. Most members like the song, but have trouble finding a pattern for the chorus. After a few failed attempts at adding a second part, most members agree that it may be best left unchanged. Martin is visibly irritated by the whole thing, as he was quite proud of how he and Nathaël had arranged

the song prior to any changes to it. The fourth time around, the song sounds significantly better, but the words still are problematic. Tensions mount as Mélane feels pressured by the others to alter the words of the song. Martin suggests that they practice the song Mélane wrote for the World Youth Day 2006 pilgrimage. Mélane apologizes for allowing herself to become fractious, and jokingly announces that she watched "The Notebook" today, and it's made her sensitive. After a few tense moments, the band is launched into the next song.

It is vital to understand that repertoire is not the only variable in these contexts, but that they also impact the manner in which the members interact with each other and their audience, the positioning of the players, the choice of musicians, the selection of equipment, and the overall energy of the music, among other variables. Factors which influence situational context include occasion, audience, space, place, date, and players, among others.

The first of these situational contexts is the private jam session. Organized by Martin, Nathaël, Amélie or another senior member, these are private performances where only select members of the band are invited. Most often, one member will organize the session, and make her/himself responsible for contacting the musicians, arranging a date and time, and setting up the space. At times, these sessions are held during semi-open-house parties, where the band will showcase their musical talents at volumes so loud that the use of earplugs by both the players and their audience is de rigueur. The repertoire during these sessions is quite restricted, limited mainly to drum-heavy rock tunes varying from grunge, alternative, or metal to electronica and sombre Brit-pop. Standards are

songs from the 1990s Seattle scene, including such bands as Nirvana, Soundgarden, The Meat Puppets, and Mudhoney, Bass licks by Primus, tunes by Brit-pop artists like Radiohead and Aereogramme, metal from Tool, A Perfect Circle, Slayer or Pantera, metal-rap from Korn and Limp Bizkit, and bits of electronica, emulations of Buckethead and Nine Inch Nails. Songs from the members' early attempts at music-making are included as comic relief, which opens the door to sounds such as The Offspring, Green Day, and The Presidents of the United States of America. Songs from Shaïda's sacred repertoire are never played, and allusions to them are very uncommon. As they are considered sacrosanct, the members feel they would not suffer being played out of their sacred context.

The second context is the band's in-church jam sessions. Held prior to or following a rehearsal or performance, or following a church-organized activity, these are private performances where the whole of the band is normally present, but where the normal "rules" of the band, such as who plays what and in which order, are overlooked. While members take turns leading songs, others harmonize and accompany them as best they can. The repertoire during these sessions is by far the most encompassing, including Canadian rock from bands such as The Tragically Hip, Our Lady Peace and Neil Young, traditional Acadian tunes, Brit-pop, American alternative rock, and country songs.

Corporate jam sessions are the third context in which members of Shaïda make music. These public shows normally follow performances at Mass. For the past three years, for instance, immediately following the Paschal Vigil Mass there has been one of these sessions in the church basement. After the Mass, the parishioners are invited to join

the band downstairs, where fricot (a traditional Acadian chicken soup), sandwiches, and homemade bread are served, and members of Shaïda perform for the assembly. Since the Paschal Vigil Mass is more than three hours long, the two additional hours of performance are significant, yet the great majority of the band members choose to remain present. The choice of song mostly consists of local Acadian artists and Acadian bands, although certain other American classics are slipped in.

Concerts are the fourth situational context where a different repertoire is used. Unable to depend on the usual crutches (the edge of heavy music during the private jams, the popularity of Canadian content of church-based sessions, or the appealing rhythm of the Acadian music of the corporate jams), the concert repertoire is selected for its visual qualities, its profundity, and its fit with the concert's theme. The repertoire for concerts consists mainly of songs borrowed from the band's sacred repertoire, but also makes use of a significant number of songs previously included in their active Mass repertoire but which were subsequently abandoned because they were deemed inappropriate for play in the Roman Catholic Church (a detailed discussion of this process can be found in the earlier part of this chapter, as well as in Chapter 5). The concert repertoire also includes sung prayers borrowed from Marie-Jeunesse and Exo, as well as a number of "religious" songs from popular culture.

Mass as Situational Context; Repertoire Categorization

Mass is the last of the situational contexts with a specific repertoire. Since the Mass and its music, and details of performing are discussed at length in other chapters (Chapters 5 and 7, respectively), this examination will limit itself to the variance in repertoire within this context. Specific parts of the Augustinian Mass require specific types of song; this is the first and most useful manner in which members categorize their material. The various parts of the Mass are governed by different rules, and those parts of the Mass that the band feels should be full of the awe and wonder of the Old Catholicism are conceived of in much stricter terms than those parts where freedom and individual liberties are understood to be in order. For this reason, the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei*, relating the Mysteries or Salvation, are much more limited in style and scope than the *Pater noster* or the *Gloria*. Classifying songs by their place, purpose and function in the Mass is obviously the band's main method of categorization. For this reason, a number of song names remain unknown to the band members, who refer to songs by their sound or lyrics instead of their titles. A number of songs are referred to as "le Kyrie" or "le Gloria" or "le chant de Communion," and are then described by the humming of a bass line or the tapping out of the beat.

Categories based on the function of a song in the Mass are more or less fluid, especially in the case of the Communion hymn, the Opening Hymn, and the Closing Hymn, as these are often interchangeable. Shaïda's songbooks, which contain most of the Sunday Obligation Mass songs, are partitioned according to the main function of a song in the Mass, so as to make song selection for every Mass a simpler and quicker process.

The number of songs for each of the Mass' parts in Shaïda's repertoire depends primarily on how static these are in meaning. Since the text for a Gloria is set and can vary only slightly from the words prescribed by the Church, and since it always has the same purpose (the glorifying of the action of the Lord in the sinners' lives), the band has a very limited repertoire for this song; only four entries. The Communion hymn, on the other hand, is considered to be related to the particular Mass' readings and its overall message. Furthermore, the Roman Church does not prescribe a particular text for its celebration. For these reasons, the active repertoire of the band counts over forty Communion hymns.

The Church's liturgical calendar compels the selection of yet another type of repertoire selection, that of the feast. While the band has a significant catalogue of songs in its Christmas and Easter collections, it also has a quantity of material for Advent, Lent, Pentecost, Christ the King, the Assumption, and other Saints' feasts. As the seasons change, certain parts of the band's active repertoire become passive, and vice-versa. Perhaps occasioning even more considerable differences than special days in the liturgical calendar are special days in the life of parishioners. Baptisms, Confirmations, high school graduations, weddings and funerals are Masses where the band performs a different repertoire, reserved for the occasion. Significantly, these occasions have motivated the writing of most songs composed for Shaïda, and often done so on the spot.

Repertoire classification is also done in terms of the specific parish in which the band is to perform; the members of Shaïda feel that the Mass in Cocagne should be livelier and more upbeat than the Mass in St. Antoine, for instance, because of the nature of the parish. The repertoire chosen for Shaïda's Missionary Masses is often the most

contrasting, as the band attempts to at once shock the parishioners with loud and boisterous songs for the first part of the Mass (the Entrance Hymn, the Gloria, and the Psalm), and then conduct them in deep meditative prayer with the soft tones of ballads à la ‘Smashing Pumpkins.’

The members of the group identify a number of favourite pieces, which are quite often performed. Most of these songs have exceedingly simple melodies and very little texture; they are favoured because they strike a chord with the members. *Veilleurs*, *Donnes-moi un coeur tout simple*, *Notre Pere*, and *Soixante-trois* are almost unanimously mentioned in lists of oft-played favourites, although *Le Seigneur regne*, *Louange a toi notre Dieu*, and *Priere a l'Esprit Saint* are almost as popular among the group. Catherine shares her experience of Amélie's rendition of *Donnes-moi un cœur tout simple*:

There's not one time they sang that that I didn't get shivers. There are songs I could probably sing and play, well that one, forget it. I can't sing it, I'm too in awe. When they get the harmony in there, I can almost fall off my chair! And that's me listening to them. And how many times has she sung that tune and it still marvels me (CL-I).

Further Classifying the Repertoire: Languages

To start with, the repertoire of Shaïda is made up of songs in four different languages: French, English, Latin, and Creole. Since Vatican II introduced the vernacular in the Mass, it has been a common practice in Roman Catholicism for choirs, orchestras, bands, and the like to perform songs in various languages. Western theologians typically applaud this effort, as Costa explains:

Songs in a foreign language or in several languages, chants in Latin or Greek; the use of musical instruments from other countries and cultures; and so forth. This is an important signpost for the church. We should welcome it concretely, in the field of liturgy and music as well, and encourage our assemblies in the direction of 'polycultural universality' (Costa 1991: 76).

The inclusion of different languages in the Mass in the Sainte Famille Parish Unity is also welcome by parishioners, who often report being pleased with the variety that this provides.

Shaïda's understanding of the purpose of a song considerably impacts the choice of language, and at times, completely circumscribes which will be used. French, by far the most extensively utilized, is the standard; the maternal language of all the present members, it is also the language of most of the Masses in which Shaïda perform. The colour of the French used in Shaïda's songs is very different than that spoken by the band; while they normally speak "Chiac," the Mass is perceived as a space where "bon Français" ("good French") is called for, and the "Chiac" normally spoken is grammatically different than "proper French." When addressing the issue of which language would be most suitable for use in the liturgy, Anscar Chupungco remarks that "the spontaneous reaction of the people is the best measure to gauge the success of adaptation." He explains that a good liturgy "has to reflect the experience of the community, or, to use a current expression, it must be relevant" (Chupungco 1982: 74). This type of "relevance" is a difficult question, however. Members of the band often have difficulty finding the balance between what is proper and what can be understood. While the majority of the differences this occasions are limited to grammatical errors (i.e., the singularizing of "ténèbres" in "Prière de St. François"), certain sentences are so distorted

that they adopt new connotations, and certain songs assume whole new meanings (i.e. “Enfants de l’Humanité”).

English is the cultural language of most members, and as such, is not as prone to distortion as French. Significantly, English is only used for worship songs (i.e., “King of Glory” and “The Love Song”), mostly issued from the evangelical Protestant tradition. In addition to this, the songs highlight almost exclusively the divine attributes of Jesus Christ (as opposed to the sacredness of God the Father or the Holy Spirit). Because of differences in the theology of songs borrowed from evangelical sources, however, the number of English songs in Shaïda’s Mass repertoire is continually diminishing.

Creole, which is not wholly understood by the members of Shaïda (yet is close enough to French that members are able to piece together meaning), is perceived as a celebratory language. For this reason, Creole is reserved for exultant songs for upbeat parts of the Mass. Creole is perceived as exotic, and members feel it demonstrates the band’s global perspective. As is the case with all folk songs (and all songs learned informally), “despite provenance, given a vital song-culture, the process of ‘localization’ continuously transforms the obscure into the understandable” (Narváez 1995: 219).

Latin is the language of choice for the most intimate parts of the Mass – the parts where the congregation beseeches God for His forgiveness (the *Kyrie*) and for His absolution and peace (the *Agnus Dei*), and where the Congregation *communes* with God through the consumption of His Body. Though the Communion, the *Kyrie* and the *Agnus Dei* are indeed the most personal parts of the Mass, I also

suspect that the members of the band assign them special status not only because of their intimacy, but because these are also the least understood rituals and considered “Mystical” (see Chapter 3). Tom Beaudoin posits that the Roman liturgy’s religious power partly lies in its invocation of symbols that provide no clear meaning.

Phrases such as *kyrie eleison* and *alleluia*, which “resonate deeply and continuously because they are ‘wholly other,’ always escaping finally being grasped” (2000: 167), help us to come into contact with God and the transcendent. Beaudoin borrows from Rudolph Otto to expand on this concept. Otto states that the liturgies that invoke the holy are “instances of the analogy to the mysterious afforded by that which is not wholly understood... and at the same time venerable through age” (Otto 1969: 65; in Beaudoin 2000: 167).

With Vatican II, however, the Church tempered its rejectionist stance and, guided by the concept of *aggiornamento*, sought to rid itself of the archaic aspects of its ritual, and at the same time sought to make the Mass more accessible to the laity by gradually abandoning the universal Latin in favor of the languages of the people. The introduction of the vernacular in the Roman Mass was momentous not only because it permitted the faithful to understand the Mass. The Second Vatican Council’s decision that the liturgy for the local assembly “must speak its own language, which includes not only the words but also the gestures and movements, the songs and the way they are sung, the musical instruments and the way they are played” (Costa 1991: 74) detracted from the Mass’ mystical, numinous “feel.” The reasoning that “the local assembly should not be transported to an alien world or

uprooted from its own tradition” (Costa 1991: 74) may not have been a new approach, but it certainly did impact the manner in which the faithful lived and perceived the Mass. Roman Catholic theologian Anscar Chupungco notes that this type of adaptation has been a constant feature of Christian liturgy, being part and parcel of her tradition. He explains: “The apostles did it, and so did the fathers of the Church and her pastors far into the Middle Ages. Adaptation of the liturgy to various native genius and tradition is not a novelty but fidelity to tradition” (Chupungco 1983: 3; in Pérez 1988: 3). Shaïda’s use of Latin in these parts of the Mass, consequently, is an attempt to re-introduce the sense of the numinous sacred which was damaged in the transitional phase after the Council.

CHAPTER 7: PERFORMANCE

Nathaël, coffee in hand, arrives last at the rehearsal. As usual. As the other musicians taunt him with the customary insults, attacking his choice of coffee (Irving instead of Tim Horton's) and teasing him about making progress, "you're only forty minutes late this time," the singers take their places and fine-tune the placement of their microphone stands. Though they have already done this a number of times, the presence of the drummer puts them at ease and concretizes the fact that the rehearsing is about to begin. As Alvin tunes his guitar one last time, Martin performs the latest Primus licks he has learned for Nathaël. Jonathan quietly listens, intent on analyzing Martin's fingering so as to repeat it later.

Adrien, who has been getting the sound board ready, raises his hand, motioning everyone to stop what they are doing and listen. The singers take a seat while the musicians, who feel that Adrien's explanations rarely concern them, keep adjusting their equipment and practicing at low volume. The remainder of the group essentially ignores the musicians' noise. After years of experience, most of the group has concluded that letting the musicians play while the agenda is being planned and decisions regarding repertoire are being made is the best way to keep them interested in the rehearsal and the only way to keep them there for longer than two hours. Despite the clamour of the bass, lead guitar and the drums being wailed on, Adrien effectively manages to facilitate the group's decision-making. The date of an upcoming Missionary Mass is thrashed out. The remainder of the group is disappointed that Mireille will not be present because she has a

soccer tournament. Jérémie loudly announces that the group will be praying for her victory while she is playing. His half-joke is well received, and the next topic of discussion is brought to the table. "What about the thing in Fredericton?" Jessica enquires. Following a sort discussion on the fact that the trip has already been rescheduled a number of times, it is decided that the trip will be scheduled for the third week of the next month.

Sensing that the younger members are beginning to lose interest, Adrien calls for the band to get ready to play the introduction which will be performed at the next Mass. The singers spring up, re-adjust their microphone stands one last time, and the musicians turn up their volumes. Alvin gives Catherine a quizzical glance, who shows him the timing of the song on her own guitar. Reassured, Alvin nods at Nathaël and Martin, depending on the drummer and the bassist to give the four-count beat into the song. After a few hurried runs at the bass lines, Martin motions to Nathaël that he is ready. On the drummer's signal, the entire instrument section begins playing. A false start. The musicians play it through regardless, unconcerned, and Alvin's signal is received by the leads, who sing the first verse. The chorus is performed loudly, everyone joining in. Sitting a few pews from the front of the church, Adrien is content with the piece, though many of the players struggled through to find the chord progression. "Good enough," he says. Adrien has barely voiced "Now. What do we do about the psalm?" when the musicians start playing a lick from 'Modest Mouse.'

The Rehearsals

Shaïda's rehearsals are informal meetings where most of the band is present to practice, discuss upcoming events, and make music. The sessions are very casual and marked with an air of enjoyment. As members gather in the church, each takes his or her place at the front. The earlier arrivals do not typically much mind the fact that others consistently arrive late, as this gives them the opportunity to chat, "hang out" and discuss details relevant to only certain members of the band. When enough members have arrived ("enough" is more exactly defined by *who* is present than *how many* are present), the band directly begins to rehearse. This is in sharp contrast to all other church-related choirs or bands with which Shaïda has been in contact – most other groups begin their rehearsals with a prayer which is followed by a formal warm-up guided by the director. Though a number of participants have been vocal about their desire to begin with a prayer, no one has ever brought up the need for (or the benefits of) a warm-up. When I brought it up, a number of members voiced that such warm-ups are both unnecessary and "very corny," which is something to be avoided at all cost (see Chapter 4).

The members take rehearsals as opportunities to get to know each other better by chatting, joking and playing tricks on each other. Not only do the members arrange themselves in the same way as for performances, they also play and perform as if there was an audience. As Ray Allen notes in his study of sacred quartets in New York City, rehearsals serve as valuable training grounds for younger singers, whence the veterans transmit their skills (Allen 1991: 58). In her study of *companhias* in Brazil, Mary Reily notes the following:

companhias do not rehearse, if by a rehearsal one understands the pursuit in the performance of a piece in which stress is placed on the product of the performance. In their rehearsals they do not stop in the middle of a toada to correct mistakes; they do not select out different transitions and perform them over and over again to get them just right; and there is no conductor attempting to draw out her personal interpretation from the musicians. In terms of the sounds of the music, there is little to distinguish their performances at rehearsals from their performances at visitations (Reily 2002: 88).

The same is true in the case of Shaïda. The director limits his impact to helping the youths ‘blend’ (see Chapter 6) but void of outright conducting. Rehearsals are physically organized in the church space exactly as when they are to perform for a Mass. Mistakes are perceived as natural and unavoidable.

The group is acutely aware of its inability to perform most of its repertoire without at least a few considerable mistakes. The group is not ready to invest the time or effort into making their performances flawless. In fact, there is not one song in the group’s entire repertoire that members would deem adequately mastered enough to be performed without at least a few important technical mistakes by some performers. Because members of Shaïda do not highly prize precision or exactness in performance, the group’s policy on attendance is as lenient as its recruitment policy (see Chapter 2). Most members feel free to miss rehearsals and performances, and attendance is erratic at best. The semi-open nature of membership in the group is made up of a core membership as well as a fluctuating membership. Mercédès Pavlicevic defines the character of such a semi-open group: “Some people might join for a few sessions and decide to leave, others may come for some time and their lives might take them in other geographic directions. Some return after an absence, some are one-off attendances, others attend erratically (Pavlicevic 2003: 54). This policy is problematic for some members, who feel they put in more than others. Considered very difficult to replace on short notice, the drummer and the bassist are the

only members who must report their non-attendance in advance. Nathaël and Martin, who are by far the least able to control their schedules (as they do shift work), are nonetheless the most dependable and regular members of the band.

Most of the time spent at rehearsals is focussed on the creation and recreation of an ever-changing and evolving repertoire (see Chapters 2 and 5). To some extent, mistakes and imprecision are perceived as desirable. Some members have shared that the fact that Shaïda's sound is far from perfect, encourages other youths to join the group by making the band appear more accessible to people with less musical talent (see Chapter 6 for a discussion on quality of overall sound).

Communicative Competence

Following Richard Bauman's lead (1977), this chapter will now serve to assess elements of the band members' verbal, spatial, and corporal conduct in the context of performance as "communicatively competent." For Bauman, communicative competence is defined as "the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways" (Bauman 1977: 11). He explains that performers assume an accountability to their audiences for how communication is achieved, above and beyond its reverential content. "From the point of view of the audience," he writes, "the act of expression on the part of the performer is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of competence" (Bauman 1977: 11). Diane Goldstein signals that since members of the group being studied "recognize both

competent and incompetent performances, and [since] density and richness of expressive devices is not the only criterion by which such competence is evaluated” (1995: 30), it is imperative to consider emic understandings of performance competence, a practice she laments is regrettably uncommon among scholars of performance (*ibid*: 29). Goldstein explains that though the members of the group being studied may “hold a notion of an abstract ideal speaker-hearer, it is more likely that they conceive a system in which speakers excel differently and in which events and performances are emergent” (*ibid*: 30).

Members of Shaïda, more so than the rest of the church community, and as any member of a performance-oriented folk group, recognize both competent and incompetent performances (Goldstein 1995: 30). Performance competence (Hymes 2001) includes a gamut of evaluative categories, which are judged differently by the several concerned parties. This includes, but in no way is limited to, as Goldstein notes (1995), density and richness of expression. Competence is also evaluated by displays of virtuosity and musical competence, dramatic ability, the choice of subject matter tackled, appropriateness of timing (in terms of both the Mass and the liturgical calendar), and discrimination regarding expected behaviour, respect of the established rules of order, metacommunicative signaling such as dress, and what Ray Allen refers to as “emotional intensity, and... genuine ‘spiritual feeling’” (Allen 1991: 143).

Frames and Power

Folklorist Beverly Stoeltje notes that “[a]s scholars of ritual, we are searching for outcomes when we search for meaning and transformation in ritual, and we are looking for the locus of power when we examine the means by which ritual achieves its effect” (1993: 140). During their performance of Shaïda in the context of the Mass, the members of the band are bestowed with ritual authority, but are constrained by certain limitations. Stoeltje notes that “those who are generally behind the scenes making decisions about the way that form and performance will converge are exercising power over the performers.” She continues: “They control access to the performance of ritual... and they exercise a degree of control over form” (*ibid*: 141). The creative licence of the group is limited not only by the traditional form and content of the Mass, but also by the expectations of their audience.

At the ambo, the reader proclaims: “The Word of the Lord.” The congregation responds with a monotonous “Thanks be to God,” and some of the older members begin to rise for the Acclamation. The singers take their places at the microphones, and the musicians adjust the volume on their instruments. When the remainder of the congregation is standing, Alvin plays the first four bars as an introduction. His ritardando is Nadia’s indication to begin. Nathaël, still adjusting his Roland Virtual drums, taps out the beat on the bass drum while working out the pattern he will use. Nadia begins to sing, in her characteristic gentle tone: “Dieu fidèle, tu ne changes pas,”

she voices, drawing in the listeners. The audience can ascertain that this song parallels the day's Second Reading from the epistles, and a number of them nod their heads, showing they have understood the connection between the two.

Having paid close attention to the chord progression and pattern, Martin slides down into the first note of his bass line. Jesse, who was absent for the learning of this song, takes in sixteen bars before joining in on lead guitar. When the musicians have all joined in, the group eases into "the groove" and becomes tight, depending on Nathaël to keep them together. The transition into the second verse disrupts the groove. Martin, following Alvin while listening to Nathaël's rhythm, is thrown off track by the drummer's false start. Alvin and the singers, having fallen out of sync, caused Nathaël to interpret Alvin's indication as primary to the vocalists', who were waiting for another eight bars to come in. After a quick glance, Catherine and Alvin repeat the same bars, forcing the singers to delay their entry. Martin, Jesse and Nathaël hurriedly try to interpret Alvin's intention, and soon fall into the groove again. Easing into the second verse, the musicians give each other knowing looks, silently congratulating each other for the quick recovery.

At the end of the second verse, Jessica and Lina add in their harmonies, respectively above and below Nadia's melody line. Nathaël leads into the chorus with an anticipatory accented beat while the rest of the instruments pause for added emphasis. A full sound is built at the chorus when the rest of the singers join in, with men doubling an octave below and a few more harmonies. Jacques, Nadia, Amélie and I, slightly in the foreground, sing the prayerful chorus. The other singers emulate the sound, feeding off the energy demonstrated by Jacques and Amélie, who tilt back their heads to "squeeze

out” more sound. In mid-sentence, Jacques turns to me and with a sideways glance, invites me to follow his lead in the harmony line. As the female leads sculpt the melody line, Jacques and I direct the other male singers with body language and by intentionally projecting our voices towards them. The assonant accented phrasing we use to harmonize cuts through the women’s melody and makes the overall sound more complex, with a fuller texture. Some of the men in the choir have difficulty hearing the harmony, and so switch from the melody to the harmony depending on which they feel they can best follow at any given moment in the song.

Alvin signals the end of the song with a slight nod, which Amélie and Jacques repeat to ensure that the musicians have understood. On Alvin’s repetition of the chord sequence, he motions to Nathaël, who, with a slight ritardando, leads into the last bar. The guitarists let their instruments ring, then lower their volumes as Nathaël’s concluding crash cymbal fades. The singers quickly assess whether they should remain standing or sit, and follow the lead of the first to act. Having concluded their performance, the members of the group simultaneously turn their attention to the president. The priest, who had been intently listening to the performance, in order to later refer to it in his homily, takes his cue and calls the congregation to rise.

Performance Frames

Before moving on to a discussion on the rules and aesthetics guiding the performance of liturgical music by Shaïda and the variously concerned individuals’ ideas

about performance competence, a discussion on how the band is framed by their performance is in order, for the former is guided by the latter. If performance is “a special mode of behaviour in which the performer takes responsibility for a display of competence” (Berger and Del Negro 2004; see also Hymes 1975; Bauman 1977; 1989), an analysis of this performance must take into account the various ways in which the performers and their performance are set apart, structured, and supported.

The first frame to guide the performance of the band is of course the sacred and allegorically symbolic meaning of the space in which the Mass is celebrated. Most significantly, the sense of the sacred with which Roman Catholic churches in Acadia are imparted by their faithful is unparalleled in the area. The symbolism of the churches is also an important aspect to consider. In the church of Cocagne, where the majority of Shaïda's Masses are held, the horizontal is the axis which possesses the most meaning-bestowing influence, as the post-Vatican II church emphasizes distance rather than height. On the large half-octagonal platform raised three steps above the nave floor sits the altar, the ambo, and the tabernacle. To the left of the church are the choir risers, in front of which Shaïda is placed. Emblematic, Eucharistic and sacred objects infuse the atmosphere with their meanings, as does the presence of the Tabernacle (the Holy of Holies), but since members of Shaïda do not come in contact with these nor do they have the opportunity to influence their use (at least directly), these articles are beyond the scope of this chapter.

The behaviour, action and thought of the band itself are also framed by other considerations. Firstly, because of their perception of the sacredness of the church space,

they do not normally discuss the same things inside the church as they would outside of it. Within this sacred space, moreover, certain areas are marked as more “special” than others, and this architectural differentiation in perception coordinates and arranges the band’s movement and conduct within the building. The consumption of food within the building, for instance, is poorly received inside the sanctuary proper, while coffee, water or lemonade has become acceptable. Whenever food is to be eaten, the members do it in the back room, with the doors closed. Secondly, because of the youths’ perception of specific *times* as sacred, they demonstrate their communicative competence accordingly. An example of this is the “voicelessness” of the group during Mass. Although the band has often been directly addressed by the various priests and lay readers during the Mass, the youths do not respond verbally to these comments, expressions of gratitude, or encouragements. During the 2006 Easter Vigil Mass, the priest directly addressed the band at length, thanking them for their presence at Mass and inviting them to respond. Though each of the youths recognized the priest’s words as an invitation for them to speak, they remained mute, unwilling to temporarily step out of their role as music ministers to take on that of witnesses. While the youths are empowered by the amplification of their voices and instruments, their communicative competence of the rules involved in performance ensures their silence whenever they are not performing their ministerial function. This “voicelessness” of Shaïda’s members during performance is linked to their perception that their vocal contact with the audience would “break” the Mass, and interfere with its symbol and action. The youths understand the priest to be the sole leader and the sole individual in a possession of true unequivocal leadership. Enjoying the highest degree of expected performance competence, the priest’s cues are

followed by the assembly. As an exception, Nathaël has, on certain extraordinary occasions, spoken through his drums, giving the beat to a joke from priest. When I enquired about why he felt comfortable breaking the customary taboo, he offered two reasons: he felt at ease doing so because of the atmosphere which reigned at this very particular time in the Mass, and he was merely following the priest's cue.

Perhaps more significant than the frames established between Shaïda and the architectural space are the frames which are intentionally produced and which emerge involuntarily. Whenever they are to perform in a new space, the members of Shaïda normally arrive more than an hour earlier than the remainder of the congregation. While the great majority of the group are "out-of-towners" at most performances, and the totality of members during the band's Missionary Masses, this most obvious frame dividing the performers themselves from the remainder of the assembly is far from the only important one. Upon their arrival in the empty space, they begin to prepare for what they commonly understand as their forthcoming purpose: to fill the space with sound, movement, and life. This situation is strikingly different from the parishioners', who, upon their arrival in the sanctuary, are greeted by the silence they will attempt to emulate during the Mass, and the atmosphere of peaceful reverence they will endeavour to recreate both within the space and within themselves as the Mass progresses.

In addition to this disparity, the members of Shaïda are set apart from the remainder of the congregation from the time of their arrival at the church by their physical location in the church. Before the Mass, they normally occupy the back rooms of the church, which are psychologically marked off from the remainder of the church as

“private” areas (see Appendix III: 8). Because rehearsals and last-minute adjustments occupy their time, the spatial distance between performers and audience is not typically crossed before the Mass. Preferring to concentrate on perfecting (or learning) their various parts, performers do not typically mingle with the incoming parishioners before Mass.

While, for the purpose of ritual, they are symbolically a part of the congregation, the band is apart from the congregation in significant ways. This first separation between “performer” and “audience” is quite marked. During the Mass, the members of Shaïda are set apart from the congregation, onstage. Shaïda is further psychologically separated from the general congregation by their orientation towards them. The singers and some of the musicians stand at different times than the remainder of the congregation, compounding the already obvious differences between performers and their audience. There is very little grey area; members who feel too ill to perform on a given Sunday and ex-members report feeling separate from the group by their presence among the general assembly, and do not participate in the same manner; they meld in with the congregation, and their participation even in the singing of songs marked as their own is limited (JG-I).

A very different type of frame from those previously discussed is that of movement. Performers enjoy a certain freedom of movement unknown to most other members of the congregation. Before the Mass begins, the organizers freely walk about the church. This mobility sharply contrasts the behaviour of the remainder of the congregation, who, once past the vestibule, make a beeline to their pews and remain there until the Mass ends, only to make a beeline back to the door. Once the Mass has begun,

the youth move about their space, following the Mass in their own way. Between songs, they make adjustments to microphone stands, find the next song in the songbooks, and leaf through the *Prions en Église* to follow the ritual and the readings. The band enjoys a wider range of movement during the sharing of a sign of peace than the remainder of the congregation as well. They will shake hands, hug, kiss, or amicably punch each member of Shaïda, and then proceed to share this conviviality with the congregants in the few pews around them. While this is happening, the great majority of the congregation stand in their pews, waiting for the next section of the Mass to begin. One innately feels that most members of the assembly would really enjoy such a freedom. During the Easter Vigil, each year, the priest invites the entire church to get out of their pews and share the good tidings of the Risen Christ *à la Shaïda*. The musicians are acutely aware of their special status, and often consider themselves exempt from following the directions of the priest, as in being called to stand, sit, or kneel because of their instruments. Other exemptions include the offering baskets not extended to the performers, and the serving of the Communion Host first (in order for the congregation to have music while taking Communion).

The musical ensemble is also framed as “performer,” and set apart from the audience by their knowledge. Most importantly is their knowledge of the songs themselves. Additionally, because the members of Shaïda have normally learned and practised the songs during the previous week's rehearsals (as well as countless other times), the members know *which* songs will be played and at what times. Furthermore, because they had to prepare and choose the songs to be played, they know which readings

will be read, or at least the overall theme of the Mass. This sets them apart from most other parishioners, as only very few read the texts in advance. Compounding the difference between the performers and the audience is the fact that because they attend Mass more often, on average, than other youths, they are better cognizant of the rites. Moreover, because they are exposed to a behind-the-scenes preparation of the Mass, they typically gain more knowledge of its fine points, a knowledge which is also much influenced by participation (participating actively in the liturgy, they must pay closer attention to what is happening).

Because they are on a stage and turned towards their audience (see Appendix III: 4), members of Shaïda normally try and maintain a quiet demeanour whenever they are not exercising their ministerial function. During the Mass, the obvious centre of attention is the sanctuary, where the scripture readings are done and the priest enacts the Last Supper and the Sacrifice of Christ. While the attention of the congregation is on the sanctuary, the musicians and singers enjoy a freedom of expression largely unknown to the remainder of the congregation; the performers feel free to communicate with each other, planning for the next song, discussing style, timing, and other such concerns. Most of this communication is done through body and sign language, although whispering is also very common (see Appendix III: 3). Although most members recognize the more solemn parts of the Mass, a number of conversations nevertheless take place during even the most 'important' parts of the Mass such as the blessing of the Host and the breaking of the bread (see Appendix III: 2). This does not greatly impact the other members, who generally pretend not to notice when others are talking; some amusingly listen in on the

conversations and add their own comments and ideas, while others quietly motion the talkers to be quiet.

Because a number of performers are members of Shaïda primarily (or solely) to play music and enjoy fellowship with other youth, these performers do not necessarily feel the need to pay attention to what is being said or to follow the order of the Mass. As a result, these members will often stand out from the remainder of the congregation by remaining silent when (nearly) every other adult is reciting the required texts.

Furthermore, because these members often fail to pay attention, they are often inclined to look bored, play with their instruments at low volume, and react later than the others to the priest's prescriptions to sit, stand or kneel. Although these could appear to be minor details in timing and demeanour, it is often well noted by both the congregation and the remainder of the band.

The equipment, instruments and amplification of Shaïda function as additional frames to structure the performance. Primarily, the instruments act as walls in both a physical sense (as a drum cage in front of a drummer) and a psychological sense (as a guitarist 'talking through' his guitar). The musicians of Shaïda can express themselves through their instruments, something the congregation is unable to do. Amplification highlights Shaïda's singers while drowning out the voices of the congregation. Over and above this, the band has the power to adjust volume levels and the type of sound that they and the congregation will hear. The congregation has little power to alter this (although a certain power is exercised in the longer term). Because of monitors, moreover, the performers hear their own group better, and for this reason are better able to sing on key.

Performance is also facilitated by the fact that when one is immersed in the sound, “you feel like you can let go. One is less inhibited” (MD-I); performers are less concerned about other people’s impressions and auditory perception.

Effect of Frames

The frames physically separating the performers from the audience invite the congregation to act as spectators instead of participants in a fuller sense, and to appreciate the performance as a spectacle, and the performers as performers rather than members of the assembly. Framing also allows the audience (congregation) to critique the performance freely, as the congregation is exempt from association in the production (to a certain extent). The position of the guitarists, their backs to the crowds, marks them as accompaniment; Brian and Martin place themselves behind Nathaël and the drums; hidden from the audience, they infrequently interact with the audience. Paradoxically, however, the same frames which separate the performers from the audience can serve to unite them as well. Though they are separated from the audience by distance, the members of Shaïda are more present to the congregation than most others during the Mass because they are in clear sight. The placement of the violinist(s)/fiddler(s) in the front of the sanctuary, for instance, clearly marks them as “spectacle.” Acutely aware of this, they visually interact with the audience, something the other musicians very seldom do. The singers interact with the audience in much the same manner, albeit on a lesser level.

A further detail which lessens the distance between the performers and their audience is that the members of Shaïda are viewed as “part of the congregation,” as opposed to the priest, who is perceived as the director of the ritual and on whom the large part of the onus rests. Shaïda is also perceived as “non-threatening” because they are accessible to and by the congregation on a different level than the priest (because of the recognition of his Order and the ‘sacredness’ it implies, his status, his authority, and his formal training). In addition, most members of the congregation have gotten to know these youths on a personal level. This is difficult for a priest to achieve, as even in instances of close fellowship such as a game of 200 (a card game played by most Acadians) following the Easter Vigil Mass, the priest is still perceived as “the priest who is playing cards with us” and referred to as Father Yvon.²⁴ A few ideas about ways in which to break down the performer/audience barrier have been brought forward by the youths of Shaïda, who often demonstrate concerns about the participation of the remainder of the congregation. These ideas have included the spreading of the singers and the musicians about the congregation with wireless equipment, post-Mass chatting with parishioners, and the inclusion of more songs with a call-and-answer form. The most readily adopted means of inviting the audience to participate is the witness given by members, who, during the homily, address the congregation and speak about their lives and their participation in Shaïda. P’tite Jess, Nathaël, Amélie, Nadia, and myself have often been invited to give these testimonies, and, being one of the only occasions where members feel at ease sharing their inner motivations and feelings, these often become

²⁴ This is attested by the joke cycle of the parish meeting which is commonly circulated in Cocagne. The meeting is attended by five parishioners: a man, a woman, a priest and two nuns.

highly marked occasions which help to ascertain the band's function, purpose, and impact. More than two years before Stéphane joined Shaïda, Nathaël was invited to give his testimony in Cocagne. Stéphane nonetheless attributes this as the reason why Nathaël has remained in Shaïda:

He had gone to talk in front of the Mass, that it had really changed him. He had like started to pray and that. I don't remember when it was. A year ago, I think. I don't know, but, he had talked about going to a Mass and that, and he'd said it had changed him. Maybe that's why he's in it (SH-I).

Although they represent an array of different styles, the youth of Shaïda are framed apart from the remainder of the congregation as a unified group by their dress. Dress is a very important element in performance, at times placed on the same tier as the music itself. Fashion and music, it can be argued, are merely different forms of "feeling and living in the world, they are languages that construct spaces and identities" (Calefato 2004: 119). Clothing has been described as a sign-system (Eco 1973), a medium for the expression of the self (Goffman 1963), participation in popular culture (Cunningham and Lab 1991: 5), group belonging, dissent, individuality (Hebdige 1979), and contestation (Fiske 1989b), and is one of the first ways in which youth signal their multifarious identities and concerns. Semiologist Umberto Eco, positing that social life is a system of signs and codes, explains that "any cultural manifestation *can be viewed* as a communication process" (Eco 1973: 61; emphasis in original). Specifically addressing the issue of dress, Eco describes the ways clothing impacts on our perceptions of both the performer and the performed. As an example, he states, "[if] I were wearing a Mao suit, if I were without tie, the ideological connotations of my speech would be changed" (*ibid*: 59).

Style and Fashion

Style and the fashion are inescapable factors in popular youth music, especially in the rock/pop aesthetic from which the members of Shaïda borrow their approach. While John Fiske highlights the importance of appearance, personality, words and image(s) in the rock aesthetic's circulation of culture (Fiske 1989: 95), Simon Frith writes that "pop is nothing if not fashionable (drawing attention to its transience, to the ever familiar shock of the new)" (Frith 1996: 157).

The style and choice of clothing of the members of Shaïda are socially coded, unconsciously and unwillingly betraying, at the same time as willingly and knowingly communicating, to at least some extent, members' class, occupation, group membership, gender, musical preference, habits, and lifestyle. Furthermore, because each person's style is a collection and self-conscious imitation of his or her surroundings and sphere of influence (musical and artistic preferences, media, friends, and family) it is also indicative of their regional and cultural background.

The most obvious source for contrast in the choice of vesture among the youth of the band is of course that of gender. As in most other social situations, very clear rules establish what can, should, and will doubtlessly be worn by members of either sex. This being said, however, in opposition to a number of other religious traditions, there is a much less apparent difference between the styles of the two sexes in Shaïda. Although the male aesthetic is very much "masculine," most of the female members of the band have

adopted a style of dress that is less distinctively female and somewhat more generic. It would be easy to overemphasize the difference between the two, as while dresses and skirts are rarities, fitted hip-hugging jeans and fine fabrics are commonly worn.

The appearance of the artists signifies their place in the social hierarchies, their dress more or less clearly marking their occupation and coding their habits and lifestyles. Nathaël's wearing dreadlocks stereotypes him as a marijuana user through its link with Rastafarian subculture, while his concert t-shirts mark him as a music lover, and more specifically, a fan of alternative, metal and other "dark" musics. Brian's grunge look, an emulation of Kurt Cobain's, signals his refusal to be part of the high fashion industry (Brian's wardrobe constitutes mainly of hand-me-downs from his sister Carole and close friends). Amélie's low-cut tops, trendy hair and casual stylishness are indications of her college background, while Nadia's dignified and proper dress signal her professionalism and the nature of her vocation as a school teacher.

In addition to signalling the members' place in society in general, dress marks members' status within the group hierarchy. Older members, whose status is better established in the band, rarely voice concerns about the proper attire to be worn, and spend but little time discussing such matters. Although this could be read as simply being a matter of their knowledge about practice, I posit that it is more a matter of power relations; much of this reluctance to discuss these matters is due to their concern about betraying their ignorance and therefore losing influence within the group. On special occasions, when the subject of style and dress is brought to the table, the older members'

consensus normally trumps, as in most other matters, the opinions of the younger members.

The Communication of Style

The importance of clothing and style is underlined by a number of the band members, who posit that style is as essential to Shaïda's mission as music. Dress and style is tremendously important to members of the band. This is made obvious in numerous ways. Prior to the album release concert (see Appendix III: 6, 7), Jesse posed for pictures in his room, and labelled the digital photo of himself "concert outfit" (Appendix 2). When Shaïda was invited to play at a Mass in St. Louis, Amélie was asked to give a testimony on Shaïda and on her experience of the group following the homily. She addressed the fact that a number of youth think going to Mass is "uncool." In order to demonstrate that this is not always the case, she singled out Nathaël, pointing to his dreadlocks and saying: "Just look at our drummer: you can't be cooler than that!" The comment was much appreciated by the musicians. More than a year later, when I asked Martin whether he was embarrassed to play in a church, he answered by reminding me of Amélie's comment, highlighting specific details about the occasion – including Nathaël's dreadlocks and the Arnette sunglasses he was wearing on his forehead.

Although planned verbal statements such as Amélie's serve a definite purpose in the coming together of the band, unintentional statements are also highly marked occasions for members. One oft-recounted occasion is Nathaël's wearing of one of his

many concert t-shirts. Having recently attended a show by *Les Païens*, a popular Acadian jam band from Moncton, he had purchased a plain dark blue long sleeved shirt, with the name of the group written in bold white letters on the front and back of it. He of course had not realized that *Les Païens* (the Pagans) could be understood as referring to something other than the band. Nor had he imagined the implications of a youth band member wearing it during Mass. Amélie, having pointed this out to the other members, playfully hypothesized about the different ways in which this could be construed by the congregation. Another often-recounted instance of an inadvertent statement communicated through clothing was Charles's wearing of a new shirt sporting the logo "Everybody loves MUFF" in bold black letters on a grey background, a shirt from the Moncton Ultimate Frisbee Fun (MUFF) Club of which he is a member.

These occasions are of the essence when attempting to understand the function of dress in the context of performance, as "clothes express the attitude of the wearer and therefore mirror the aesthetic, moral, and [other] ideals of those who wear them (Cunningham and Lab 1991: 6). Charles' scandalous wearing of his questionable shirt is one of the very few indications of his opposition to the judgments of the (older, more conservative) audience, and is one of the few instances where he signified his belonging to the group *a priori*, above his belonging to the Church.

Because of Charles' reserved demeanour and his intent to become a Roman Catholic priest, the other members of the group were very surprised by his nerve. Although Charles knew full well what the words meant, he admitted that he had not considered the full effect that his shirt could have in the context in which he was wearing

it. This is one of the occasions where the other members of the group most manifestly signalled their acceptance of Charles as a member of the group; during the Mass, members continually glanced at Charles, chuckling, delighted by his audacity and amused by his innocence, and frequently made eye contact to support him in his “cause.”

The members of Shaïda strongly emphasize the value of dressing in accordance to their own styles and preferred look, and stress the importance of never subjugating their own sense of style for the sake of unity or because of people’s narrow-mindedness. Because the band has often been invited to take part in ecumenical celebrations, most members have had the opportunity to share their faith and hope with their evangelical counterparts, yet these reunions have not often resulted in the empathic communication and spiritual union that organizers hope for when they are planned. Deeply suspicious of exclusive doctrine and absolutes, the members of Shaïda unanimously report having been recurrently shocked, scandalized or disappointed by the attitudes of their evangelical brethren towards them. The youths frequently share stories about these encounters, mostly relating to the intolerance of differences in style and prudish attitudes towards dress and sexuality. By far the most common stories are about Nathaël’s various run-ins with bigotry. The young man’s dreadlocks, long goatee and black T-shirts have often attracted disapproving glare of zealots who have, on a good number of occasions, felt quite at ease pointing out the “fact” that “that kind of people” should not be permitted to play music in a church and that he should cut his hair, shave his beard, and “do something with himself” before he can be considered a “Christian.” The youth and their adult

coordinators have repeatedly felt the need to “defend” Nathaël from summary judgments by challenging or directly attacking the worldview of the person holding the opinion.

Although this is not a common practice amongst church choirs, the youths signal that their style helps the congregation better appreciate that they are “normal youths” who “just happen to sing in church” (NM-*personal conversation*). In a similar manner, it also helps to signify that they do not step out of their lay state when they fulfill a ministry in the liturgy (Challancin 1989: 70). Not only does vesture help signal the youths’ normalcy and position in the assembly, it also serves to individualize the performers. Stéphane explains that

There are often choirs that have costumes to wear. Well. Not costumes, but like- vests, or- they have to dress a certain way. I like that with Shaïda, we can dress like ourselves. It’s there that people really see our personality, instead of being dressed the same. In school, if you had uniforms, everyone would be dressed the same, you wouldn’t see their personality through it. I like it like this (SH-I).

The youths feel no restriction in their choice of clothing or accessories. The girls’ uniqueness is expressed in the way they do their hair, make-up, their jewellery and accessories (scarves, bandanas, and hats).

Dress Code

Aware of the importance of showing a unified front, the youths of Shaïda seek to create uniformity mainly through their “looking young.” This quasi-uninhibited display of individuality, members highlight, is another element that distinguishes Shaïda from “any other band,” or any other group (church, secular, professional or amateur). Members

signal the importance of this “look,” emphasizing the benefits of this lack of uniformity in helping to identify the band (AC-I4; LR-*personal communication*; NM-I). It is, however, also interesting to note influences or certain degrees of uniformity within sections of the group. Brian notices that “the girls dress in a certain color, the boys dress in a certain color, the musicians dress in a certain color” (BL-*personal communication*). This remains perhaps unapparent to most audiences and perhaps even to some group members themselves, just as many individuals do not realize or consider the influences of their surroundings on their style and any standardization this might create.

To compare with another familiar group of Roman Catholic youth, the difference between the Marie-Jeunesse religious community and Shaïda are noted by members firstly as a matter of style: “Firstly, we’re all dressed differently. But we all have the same goal. To witness of the faith and be witnesses. And in the same time have fun” (CL-I). In contrast to the common expectation among the older generation (and therefore impressed on the youth, out of respect for tradition) of the more traditional, conservative Protestant churches where Shaïda has played, Catherine dismisses dress and appearance as factors testifying to propriety and Christian righteousness in witness, preferring to highlight their function as tools for demonstrating an individual’s personal commitment regardless (or even *in spite of*) their appearance. The youths of Shaïda do feel a certain responsibility to “wear something special” (JDo-*personal communication*) whenever the group gets together, but they intimate that this is issued from their feelings about the sacred character of the church building rather than from their presentation to the assembled community.

Although there is no specified dress code aside from “dressing young” (this being merely a suggestion), members influence others by encouraging or discouraging certain aspects of their dress to better serve the band's purposes. Nathaël's dreadlocks, Amélie's colorful hair, Lina's tattoos, and Martin's skater look are often commented upon, and are sources of pride for the band. The fact that the members mention this, demonstrates that they prize Shaïda's look as casual, young, and fashionably trendy. As positive as these may be, certain other aspects of dress are coded negatively. These often become the basis of constructive criticism, and reverse compliments from within the band and from the congregation?. Brian, for instance, is often told that he “is so much more handsome with short hair!” (AC-I; LR-I), a definite hint offered so he would cut it.

Adrien is normally careful to show a business casual look, even when he is aware that only the usual youths will be present. He explains that whenever working in the garage, he changes before rehearsal, in order to encourage the youths to do likewise (AD-*personal conversation*). Alvin is also very careful about his appearance. A professional welder, his work is typically very dirty, yet he meticulously polishes up before every meeting. While Adrien prides himself in being the leader of the group by dressing professionally to fit the part, Alvin perceives himself more as a member than a leader. For this reason, his look is aimed at blending in with the remainder of the group.

The most immediately apparent detail about the members' dress is its casualness. Untucked t-shirts, hoodies, fleece jerseys, jeans, baggy ‘skater’ pants or khakis are the norm. Shoes worn are most often sneakers, skate shoes, hiking boots, or casual leather shoes. The female members wear very little (if any) makeup and often wear their hair in

ponytails, while most of the male members opt for a gelled “messy look” or un-groomed hair. A number of facial hair styles, including full beards, goatees, and handlebars, are popular, and two day stubble is unexceptional.

Effect and Import of Dress

The primary sought-after effect of this casualness of dress is to invite the other youths (and to a lesser extent, older parishioners) to do the same, therefore creating a comfortable atmosphere within the structure of the church and the Mass. The general consensus among members is that through long-term exposure to the band, members eventually become more comfortable in the church building and with the Mass in general. Jacques intimates that this process may take years to absorb, and signals the difference between the older members and the more recent additions, who will “hopefully come to represent their youth to start a trend and [thus] incite any youths who comes to church to wear a good [pair of] jeans instead of dress pants” (JDo-personal e-communication). The importance of this identification of church with the style and look of youth also serves to mark the architectural space, the ritual, and the church institution as “youth space.” The philosophy is that if the space of the Mass is marked in such a way, it will inevitably become more comfortable for youths to be present, and therefore, youth attendance at Shaïda’s Masses can be expected to increase. This is only done to an extent, and the members are constantly struggling to strike/keep a balance between their own identity and their understanding of the expectations of other youth, of adult congregants, and of God.

A number of members have demonstrated that they are comfortable in church by performing in their work clothes. For instance, one Sunday when Nathaël finished a shift later than expected at the glass factory where he works, he performed in his steel-toed boots, work pants, and an apparently dirty t-shirt. Although he voiced his embarrassment and discomfort at doing so, the remainder of the group insisted that his presence and participation mattered more than his cleanliness. Unaware of the full theological implications of his comment, Martin used one of Kurt Cobain's best known songs to make his friend feel more at ease: "Come As You Are."

Other members signal the importance of style and fashion to their sense of self and self-esteem. Stéphane shares that his "sophisticated and sometimes sporty look is my self-comfort in my own self" (*SH-personal e-communication*). The young man reasons that if he dressed differently, he likely would not feel comfortable in public. While many of the group members "dress down" for Masses, others "dress up" their look for presentations (i.e. girls replacing jeans with black pants or a skirt). This is done self-consciously, however, and is meant to not impede their expression of character and personality through their appearance.

Special days in the liturgical calendar as well as in member's lives are marked by the wearing of special dress. Dress for Christmas and Easter, being the most important celebrations in the Roman Catholic Church's liturgical calendar, is particularly important. Although there is normally a concerted effort to show unity in dress, this is trumped by the importance of "looking like youths." The emphasis on showing the young face of Shaïda aside, there remains members' encouragement of others to dress in the same color

palette as them, to wear complete suits for shock value, or to wear skirts for sophistication. Obvious differences appear during these celebrations between musicians and singers; although the importance of showing a unity in the group is always considered essential, the musicians typically dress in three-piece suits for these occasions, while singers will normally opt for a younger-looking combination of a collared shirt with dress pants. Sharing clothes is common during these celebrations, as a number of members do not have neckties, skirts, suits, or shoes to complete the uniform, although a number of members completely disregard the proposed “uniforms” and wear the same clothing as they do the remainder of the year.

Dress as Counter-Hegemonic

While Nathaël’s dreadlocks, Brian’s grunge look, and the overall multiplicity of styles of the performers encourages the use of an inclusive speech and style, and visually counters the existing oppositional frames of youth versus adults, and rural culture versus urban culture, the youths’ presence in the existing space of ritual functions as a reminder of their role in, and importance to, the Church. Clothes and style, however, do not simply act as banners for youth in the context of the Mass; certain items are used as political weapons to oppose and counteract the hegemonic power of the established order. John Fiske writes that popular culture should be understood as “a site of struggle” where hegemonic forces are “coped with, are evaded or are resisted” by creative tactics of resistance (Fiske 1989b: 20-1)

Dick Hebdige, in his avant-garde analysis of the meaning of style in youth subcultures, argues, “the tensions between dominant and subordinate groups can be found reflected in the surfaces of subculture – in the styles made up of mundane objects which have a double meaning” (1979: 2). Hebdige explains that style is the arena “in which the opposing definitions [of (sub)culture] clash with most dramatic force” (*ibid*: 3). Through their failure to conform to the expected dress codes and their assumption of various anti-fashion (Cunningham and Lab 1991: 13) elements, the members of the band demonstrate their acute awareness of the continuing struggle against the existing hegemony and the prejudice of the older members of the congregation.

Although this is attested to in multifarious ways, the most immediately apparent manner in which this is revealed in their dress is the frequent but calculated wearing of toques and ball caps inside the church. Although most male members of the band commonly wear baseball caps, wearing them inside the church is not wholly well received by all members, and few have adopted the practice. Martin and P’tit Jacques often wear baseball caps to rehearsals, but have never been inspired to do so during Mass. While wearing a hat inside the building in the context of rehearsals with the band may be a generally welcome sign of dissent and defiance considered to be within the acceptable limits, Martin is acutely aware that within the context of formal performance, this would be deemed offensive and even scandalous by much of the congregation, including a number of the members of the band. Through his failure to assent, Martin purposefully attacks the established order by using its existing structures to make a statement against it and contest literal readings of the Bible which support rules he considers not fruitful for

living. Martin, who is always careful to smartly gel his hair whenever not wearing a cap, has never performed without perfectly groomed hair, betraying his preparation, and by extension, his awareness of the difficulties wearing a hat in the company of others would engender.

P'tit Jacques, who is much younger than Martin and a more recent addition to the group, is much more obviously rebelling against the Establishment by his wearing a hat. Wearing his ball cap inside the high school where he is a student would result in its confiscation and likely a reprimand. Because the item is so much a part of his everyday rules of conduct, P'tit Jacques can be expected to be very much aware of the expected rules of behaviour regulating a building with a much more sacred character than his school. The youth uses his hat as an accessory to combat the uninvited expectations of the older generation pertaining to behaviour in the architectural space of the church and society at large.

Less aggressive in its overall approach, Shaïda's casual dress code also attacks the existing order by encouraging both the spectator and the performer to understand the Mass as less 'official,' destroying the 'normal' expectations of dress and dress codes. This is made apparent by the fact that the clothing worn by members for rehearsals is slightly different than that worn for Sunday Mass; as Jacques purposefully 'dresses down' for Sunday Mass, wearing clothes that are more casual than his habitual work clothes, Martin "punks up" for the occasion, coloring his hair and exchanging his collared shirts for the long-sleeved skater look. Nathaël, who judges his everyday look to be too extreme to be accepted by the comparatively conservative churchgoers, is likely the member who

'dresses up' most for the Mass. His daily costume, consisting of 'skater' pants, black concert t-shirts and hiking boots, is often replaced with a pair of plain black skate shoes, a casual pant and a combination plain t-shirt and unbuttoned collared shirt. Although Nathaël radically alters his style to better fit in for the Mass, he unquestionable remains the most noticed member of the band, as his dreadlocks, long goatee, dark trench coat, skate shoes and Killer Loop sunglasses mark him as an atypical churchgoer.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) conjectured that the various social classes under capitalism produce individuals who emerge from within the class and articulate, through the language of culture, that which the masses are unable to express for themselves. The members of Shaïda, through their participation in the Roman Mass, are examples of these "organic intellectuals," who, while continuing to participate actively in the everyday life of the Church, give its adherents ideological voice and political direction. While the members of Shaïda do not seek to establish a different order, they endeavour, through their style, appearance, voice, and their actions, to counter the hegemonic power imbalance within it (Gramsci 1971). Through their dress, the normally powerless Martin, P'tit Jacques, Nathaël and the other members take advantage of the empowering platform they are granted to make a subversive use of the church space (de Certeau 1983).

Performance as Counter-Hegemonic

Style is not, however, the only tool with which they youths counter the existing hegemony. Aspects of Shaïda's members' comportment also function to counteract the

authority of those in power. This includes (but is not limited to) their choice of repertoire (explored in Chapter 5), their choice of language and vocabulary (see Chapter 6), their movement in the church space and their bodily postures in performance, their use of certain instruments, and their use of communication media outside the context of the Mass. In addition, through their performances in the context of the Roman Mass, the youths of Shaïda represent not only themselves and their interests, motivations and beliefs, but also the remainder of the congregation's. Though writing on the folk musicians of the American south in the early 1900s, Tim Patterson's observations on their music are pertinent for Shaïda as well. He notes that the content of the music "represented a creative and synthetic generalization of the experience of the class, distilled and sharpened and then fed back to the class as a whole – in a local community setting." As a result, Patterson explains that the "participant character of the musical culture embodied in practice a sense of group agency, a collective role in determining at least some of the texture of life, facilitated by singers" (Patterson 1975: 282, in Limón 1983: 43). Because of the involved nature of the Mass and because of its importance in the lives of those who attend it, the material presented by Shaïda is constantly criticized or commended, and rejected or ratified by the congregation through the many avenues available to them (including immediate audience reaction, spaces and times reserved for comment, sanction by the parishes, the priests' and the Bishop's support). As Loewe explicates, performance "is an act of interpretation, one that receives close public scrutiny and, thus, provides an opportunity for demonstrating conformity or making provocative statements" (Loewe 2003: 438).

The members of Shaïda not only seek to encourage the audience to participate; they also invite their public to give them feedback. Through immediate audience reaction, the performers are able to adjust their playing to better suit the needs and wants of the congregation. Active audience feedback also allows singers to know whether or not their emotional and spiritual message is having the desired impact, and simultaneously work to build the spiritual and emotional atmosphere necessary to produce a successful performance (Allen 1991: 150). Singers are expected to have good diction so words are clearly heard and be energetic and express emotion when they sing, while musicians are expected to display a musical capacity. Embodiement is essential; as Ray Allen explains, a song

has no inherent power in its own right. It only becomes meaningful, takes on an affecting presence, when empowered by emotion emanating from the performer who is inspired by divine forces. Regardless of how enduring a particular song may be with its striking textual imagery and beautiful melodic contours, its effect on the audience will be negligible unless the individual singer charges it with sufficient personal energy (Allen 1991: 152)

Foley remarks that in the appreciation of a performance, intention alone is insufficient; embodiment is essential: "It is not simply what we say but how we say and do and pray that makes a difference" (Foley 1991: 78). Both the band and their audience are very attentive to embodiement. As discussed earlier in this chapter, dress is considered very important, as is choice of a repertoire which would fit at the same time the Mass, the talents, and the aptitudes of the performers (see Chapter 5). Ray Allen's description of New York City gospel singers' lexicon of performance aesthetics is a surprisingly accurate depiction of Shaïda's as well, and emphasizes the importance of embodiement:

while good gospel singing is spoken of in terms of activity, dynamism, and power, power performance is usually referred to in relation to inactivity and death. Singers who failed to

find sufficient energy into their performance are commonly rebuked for dragging a song... the lexicon of negative evaluative terminology is not as rich or extensive as the positive. In rehearsals, poor singing is usually criticized in terms of its lack of positive attributes. Rather than insulting a singer by calling a listless performance dead, fellow group members will comment that his or her song needs more feeling, soul, or power. Likewise, they might encourage him or her to attack, hit, drive, or push the song in a more forceful manner. The life/death, active/inactive oppositions that form the foundation of the evaluative system usually find expression through positive metaphors of life, action, and energy. Critical remarks are generally couched in terms of the absence of such vital forces (Allen 1991: 153-4)

The vocabulary used by the parishioners for whom Shaïda perform is much different than that used by the youths. Instead of being concerned with vitality, soul and action, the congregation is normally concerned with prayerfulness, gentleness and appropriateness. When commenting on the performance of specific songs during a Mass, the audience typically will congratulate the group for having been authentic, moving and expressive, and for having well selected the piece. Negative comments are generally concerning a lack authenticity, a lack of depth, or (less often) an inadequate choice of material.

Parishioners are generally very forgiving about most types of mistakes because the band is recognized as having a heightened knowledge of the fine points of the Mass. This perception is constructed through their positioning in the building, the time reserved to them, and the recognition of their experience. Members of Shaïda enjoy a significant leniency in terms of musical slip-ups and errors of diction. The priest is the only other performer that has the benefit of such leniency, as only very important blunders at key parts of the Mass could shake parishioner's trust in his communicative competence (Bauman 1977).

CONCLUSION

As the last notes of the recessional hymn are played, the two dozen members of the congregation still seated applaud Shaïda's performance. The performers smile and thank them for their encouragement. Jonathan, Catherine and Alvin, who begin to feel that their presence in the centre of the aisle is impeding communication, place their guitars on the stands and push their chairs back against the choir risers. Brian and Martin unplug their instruments and put them in their cases while Nathaël laughs at them for having missed the same note simultaneously in the last song.

Chatting with Amélie, I feel a hand on my shoulder. "Thank you. It was great to hear you this morning!" I thank Aurèle for his support, and ask him about his business. After explaining that the winter had been surprisingly good for realtors, he takes his leave. As Aurèle walks towards the back of the church to meet his wife, who is chatting with another member of the group, I turn to Brian and suggest we go out for a coffee. Brian, in his usual way, shrugs his shoulders and voices an "OK" that sounds more like a "whatever" than anything else. Nathaël, Amélie, Jérémie and Martin are immediately on board, and begin discussing the location. The small group decides that the Tim Horton's in St. Antoine is likely the best place to meet. Some of the younger members, dependent on rides from their parents, make their presence felt and politely wait to be invited. Once everyone has been teamed up with a driver, the musicians help Alvin and Adrien bring the remainder of the equipment back into storage.

Grabbing his MP3 player before even turning on the ignition, Nathaël programs it to play a selection from 'Audioslave.' Exiting the church parking lot, Jérémie waves jokingly at Mireille from the back seat, who responds by blowing us a good-bye kiss. A playful race between the three last cars to leave ensues, and continues up to the limits of the village of St. Antoine. Slowing down to enjoy parading down Main Street with the windows down and 'The Smashing Pumpkins' blaring, we pull into the Tim Horton's parking lot in time to see Martin give us the finger as he walks inside the shop, boasting his victory.

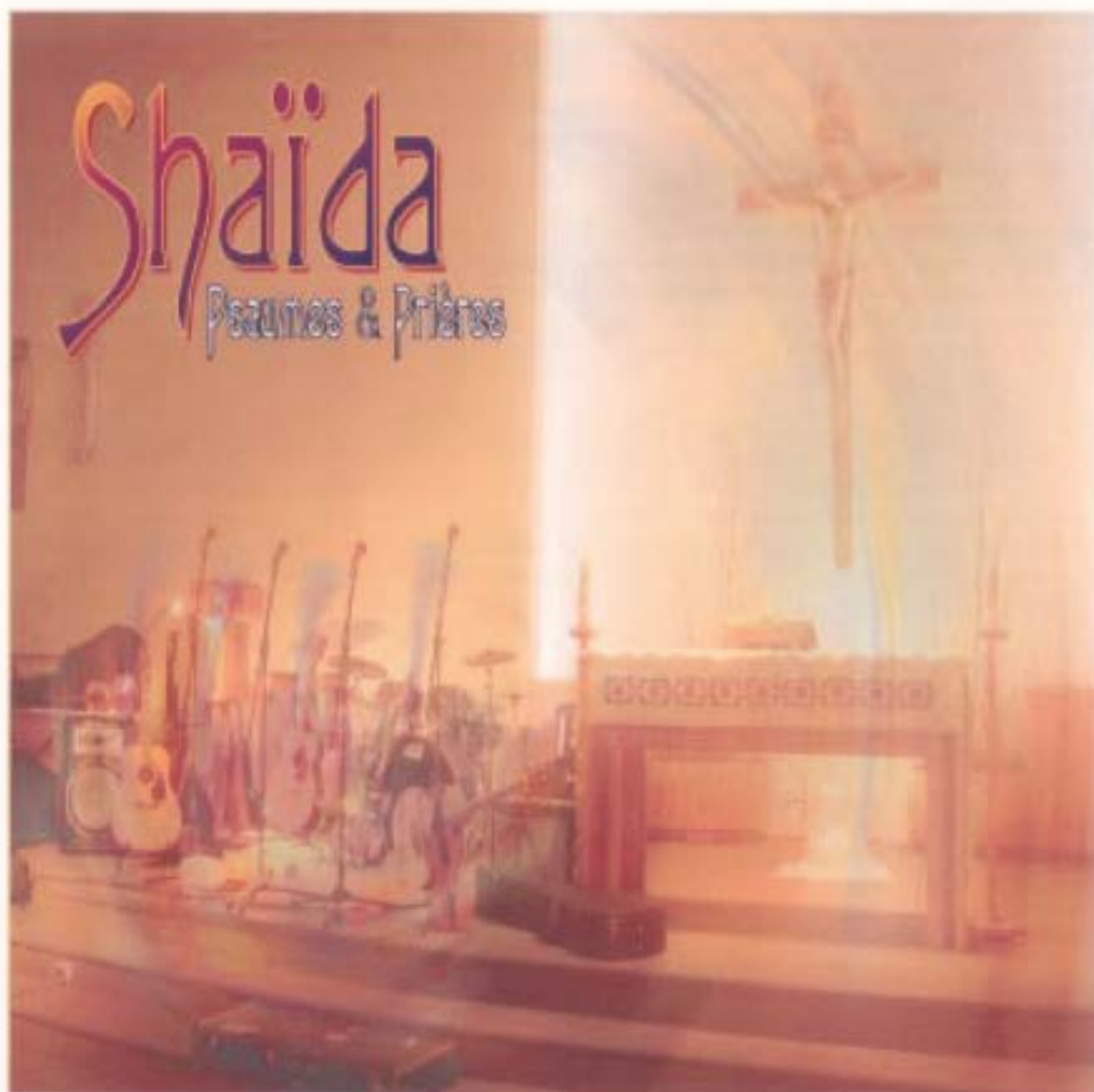
The major part of studies on belief and religious practice in the context of music-making in the discipline of folklore are concerned with minority groups. This liturgical ethnography's focus is the study of one of a great number of ways by which "average" youths from a "typical" environment share their "mainstream" faith. Persistently situating the group historically, geographically and culturally through a contextualization of their situation, this thesis' aim is to better understand how *form* – understood here as a wide category which encompasses aesthetics, style, fashion, communicative competence, and the like – can work to influence worldview, the active content of belief systems, community life, and the faith of participants.

The lens afforded by this focus on form (in contrast to a focus on belief itself) allows for an appreciation of how various *forms* of communication and interaction can, with time, come to influence belief, practice, and worldview. Thus, this exploration of a

group's music, style, performance, and genre serves as a lens for analyzing the relationships between the popular and the formal. Throughout this research, the youths' blending and mixing of their own (vernacular) culture and the Roman Church's "official" culture is highlighted. This combination of the folk and the formal has, in the context of Shaïda, been the key to the group's success. Indeed, this blend of vernacular culture and official culture is, socially as well as historically, the most successful approach for the Roman Catholic Church. The creation of a "youth space" within the Church radically influences how these youths conceptualize *belonging* in the Church. For Shaïda, we need only shift the focus to the *effects* of these individuals' participation in the group to gain a valuable insight into how the dynamic relationship between the vernacular and the official influence their sense of belonging and indebtedness to the Institution, the group itself, and to society in general.

APPENDIX I

Shaïda's Psaumes & Prières CD Cover



APPENDIX II

Anonymous questionnaire administered to the youths of Shaïda

(side 1)

[DIEU PI MOI]



Ma relation avec Dieu feel normalement comme...

- Quelqu'un qui est abandonné
- Le service loyal d'un bon friend
- Si j'étais soumis parce qu'il faut.
- Une way de me faire feeler mieux
- Le respect d'un enfant pour son père
- Un amour personnel de quelqu'un qui m'aime
- Un manque d'intérêt—j'y pense right pas souvent
- Deux vieux buddies qui aiment passer du temps ensemble
- Des étrangers qui se reconnaîtraient pas sur le bord du chemin

Ma mission dans Shaïda, c'est...

- De faire la Messe intéressante pour les jeunes
- Un ministère pour la communauté
- Une façon d'aider le monde à prier
- De célébrer le sacrifice de Jésus
- Devenir un meilleur musicien
- Un ministère pour l'Église
- D'entourer le monde
- De partager ma foi
- D'avoir d'te fun
- De louer Dieu



[YANN TCHEQUES QUESTIONS ABOUT TA FOI...]



C'EST SIMPLE: JUSTE ENCERCLE TA RÉPONSE.

1: NO WAY!
2: P'TÊTE BEN...
3: SO-SO-
4: YEAH...
5: RIGHT ON!

XXXXXXXXXX.XX

Anonymous questionnaire administered to the youths of Shaïda

(side 2)

MA FOI CHRETIENNE: WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?



Etre Catholique, c'est:

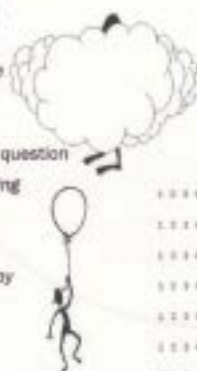
- Etre fidèle à un appel
- Accepter quoi c'est que l'Eglise dit
- Quelque chose qu'il faut apprendre
- Quelque chose qu'on raisonne
- Savoir que Dieu existe
- Croire que Dieu existe
- Penser que Dieu existe

Ma foi Catholique me force à croire que...

- L'enfer est éternel?
- La Sainte Vierge apparaît à du monde?
- Dieu veut qu'il le Pape soit head honcho?
- Le Pape peut pas pécher?
- Jésus est Dieu?
- Dieu existe?
- Tout est la faute d'un serpent?
- Jésus m'aime, MGT. (Grand Secret?)

J crois parce que...

- J'm'est jamais posé la question
- J'aime le mystical feeling
- J'feel que c'est vrai
- Mes parents croient
- Ça me rends plus happy
- Ça me distract
- Je trust Jesus
- C'est la tradition
- J'ai déjà feelé la présence de Jesus
- J'ai déjà feelé l'Esprit Saint
- Une fois j'ai rencontré un vrai Chrétien
- Les autres croient
- Voir la nature me fait feeler Dieu



J'ai déjà eu d la misère à croire ou des doutes parce que...

- La souffrance existe dans le monde
- La religion et la politique se ressemblent
- L'Eglise souffre souvent le scandale
- Il y a plusieurs religions
- Le monde se tuent pour leur "religion"
- L'Eglise insiste que j'aie à la confesse
- Jésus se trouve dans un pain toasté
- J'peux pas voir Dieu
- J'suis pas assez bon pour Dieu
- Les medias noircissent l'Eglise
- La Bible est mal interprétée
- Je comprends pas la Messe



Quand j'ai des doutes, c'est souvent about:

- L'existence de Dieu
- La justice de Dieu
- La bonté de Dieu
- La prédestination
- L'Eucharistie
- La Religion
- Le Pape
- L'Eglise
- La Bible
- La mort
- Le ciel
- L'enfer



Qui ou non ???

Il faut ti croire pour aller au ciel? oui / non

J'm'est déjà battu pour ma foi oui / non

J'ai tout le temps cru oui / non

Dieu est mon père oui / non

Dieu est ma mère oui / non

Dieu est mon frère oui / non

Dieu m'a sauvé oui / non



J'vas à la Messe...

- Pour prier
- Parce qu'il faut
- Pour être en communauté
- Pour jouer de la musique
- Pour plaire mes parents
- Pour être un bon exemple

APPENDIX III (photographs)

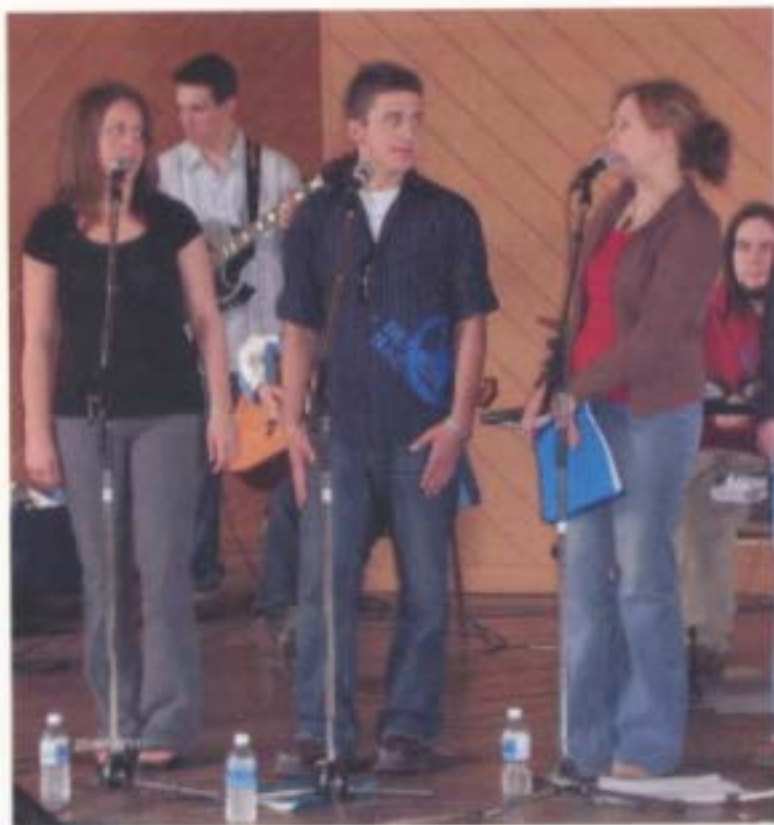
1. Shaïda performing at Mass in Edmundston, New Brunswick



2. Shaïda members during the Consecration of the Host



3. In-performance Communication



4. Performing a song (notice lyric sheets, Jérémie's hat, water bottles)



5. Nadia and I interviewed on CJSE 89.5 (the local francophone radio station)



6. Adrien's address at the *Psaumes & prieres* CD release concert



7. Shaïda's performance at the CD release



8. The singers at a last-minute pre-Mass rehearsal in Cocagne



9. Mélane and Jacques composing a song (Adrien and Charles in background)



APPENDIX IV

Song Texts, Representational of Original Repertoire

Debout

Mon fils, imite la vie des amis de Dieu!

Comme eux, fais de bonnes actions, Lèves-toi, aide le malheureux.

Entraîne ton voisin, tu es responsable de lui.

Réveilles-toi et la vie de Dieu, portera ses fruits!

Ne reste pas avec les morts! Debout, viens servir.

Ne reste pas avec les morts! Debout, sans fléchir.

Les amis de Dieu, ont été patients.

Comptes-toi parmi eux, et endures autant.

Quand le méchant t'entoure, complètement,

Au nom du Seigneur, debout, Combattant.

Quand tu sens la colère, monter en toi,

Reste calme, ne soit pas lâche, supporte avec courage.

Dieu, il te protège, sa gloire marche avec toi.

Le courage accompagne l'homme qui avance selon son pas.

quatre-vingt-huit

Avec mon élu, j'ai fait une alliance

J'ai juré à David, mon serviteur.

J'établirai ta dynastie pour toujours,

Je te bâtis un trône pour la suite des ages.

Dieu! Tu as les paroles d'alliance éternelle!

Il me dira : « Tu es mon Père »

Mon Dieu, mon roc et mon salut!

Et moi, j'en ferai mon fils aîné,

Le plus grand des rois de la terre.

Sans fin je lui garderai mon amour,

Mon alliance avec lui sera fidèle;

Je fonderai sa dynastie pour toujours,

Son trône aussi durable que les cieux

dix-huit

Seigneur mon Dieu, fais-moi connaître tes voies.

Dans la noire détresse, je t'ai appelé,

Car tu es le Dieu qui me sauve.

Rappelle-toi, Seigneur, ta douce tendresse,

Ton amour qui est et résiste toujours.

Dans ton amour, ne m'oublie pas.

Souviens-toi Seigneur, de ton amour.

Le Seigneur secoure celui qui est appelé,

Est plein d'amour pour celui qu'il a choisi,

Il multiplie ses délivrances.

Les eaux noires de la mort, elles m'entouraient

Les torrents du Malin, m'épouvantaient

Les filets des enfers, ils me cernaient.

Enfants de l'humanité

Des quatre coins du monde,

De tous les vents de l'Histoire,

Sans distinctions de religions

Ou de conditions de pureté ou de péché,

nous venons près de Toi.

Nous voici, enfants de l'humanité,

Portant la lumière de ta face sur nos visages.

Nous voici, tes enfants, tous venus près de toi

Pour poser notre vie tout contre toi,

Sûrs d'être tendrement, pris entre tes bras.

De partout, sommes-nous préférés de la même manière?

Puisque, tous, nous sommes tes enfants,

Puisque tu es notre Père Aimant,

A nous qui sommes issus de la tendresse,

De nous dresser les uns contre les autres,

De nous jeter à nos rites, de nous haïr même,

Alors que Ton Amour nous tient en vie.

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