



PUNJABI BAISAKHI CELEBRATING THE HOMETLAND

Photographs by Ranjit Singh Ahluwalia

There to thrill and inspire the young dancers were the astonishing Bhangra dance troupe of male dancers from India and New Zealand Sikh Martial Arts academy and the exquisite Gidha ladies dance group. Toddlers joined their parents onstage, while one tiny dancer, Jagan Jot, got into the action with the adults whenever he could. It was all great fun, great rhythm and a great expression of the unique roots inherited by children like Jagan. Andy Walker, magician and comedian caught the attention of children of all ages as he introduced his pet possum and fluffy rabbit. The New Zealand Central Indian Association joined in the festivities of the evening, expressing unity with fellow Indians so far from their homeland. Guests of honour were local MP Dr Paul Hutchison, Dr Ashraf Choudhary and Franklin mayor Mark Ball and Katherine Ball. Baisakhi was a time to celebrate the beginning of the harvest back home in the Punjab. But here in Pukekohe it was also a chance to celebrate being a Punjabi in New Zealand with dances of joy. As Manjit Singh put it: "Because we are a happy people."

