

## 15 August 2004 – World Culture And Arts Festival



The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia's inaugural World Culture & Arts Festival, held at Sydney Town Hall on Sunday 15 August 2004, was proclaimed unanimously as a great success. Ostensibly held on India's Independence Day, the music and dance concert with over 200 artists from cultures around the world, and an arts exhibition in fact celebrated the spirit of multiculturalism and the vibrancy of the ethnic arts community in Australia. It was opened by Indira Naidoo, popular ABC TV presenter and one of multicultural Australia's great success stories, with performances by the great Kamahl and the first Australian country music singer from India, Bobby Cash.

The performances opened with a north Indian classical Kathak-tarana, moving straight on to the Sydney Scottish fiddlers and Soka Gakkai International's Blue Sky Choir. Throughout the night, the audience took in fantastic performances from groups as diverse as the Kuuku-Yalanji tribe of North Queensland to acknowledge this nation's beginnings, the Academy of Turkish Music & Fine Arts, Natanalya Dance Academy's Bharatnatyam dances, Asim Gorassi's Sudanese peace songs, Polish dances and various South American performances, including the spectacular Raices group. With dances from the four corners of India, and the different corners of the world, the World Culture & Arts Festival was a truly spectacular occasion.



Our special guests attested to this in their speeches. The Hon. Laurie Ferguson MP, Shadow Minister for Population, Citizenship, and Multicultural Affairs, also representing the Leader of the Federal Opposition, Hon Mark Latham, said, .... The Hon. John Brogden MP, Leader of the Opposition in NSW talked about how superfluous he felt

interrupting such fabulous performances. He then said, ... The Hon. Kayee Griffin MLC talked about... The Consul General of India in Australia, the Hon. Madhusudan Ganapathi talked about the significance of holding such an event on the Indian Independence Day. Gambhir Watts, Bhavan President, gave the Vote of Thanks... Other VIPs who graced the event included, 5 Consul-Generals (list these) Professor Stuart Rees, Chair, Sydney Peace Foundation, Warren Duncan... Finally, the Festival included a souvenir of messages of support from such dignitaries as the Governor-General His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC who saw the Festival as portraying Mahatma Gandhi's observation that "our life is a long and arduous quest after Truth." The Governor-General saw this event as "conveying cultural experience, encouraging respect for difference, [and] opening up dialogue."



The Premier, Hon. Bob Carr MP wrote to congratulate the Bhavan for fostering community harmony. The Hon. Prabhat P. Shukla, the High Commissioner of India to Australia, has had many dealings with the Bhavan in India and wrote to congratulate the Bhavan and acknowledged that such events are essential to celebrating diversity and promoting Indian culture and values. The Hon. Gary Hardgrave MP, Minister..., hoped that this event would build on the spirit of social cohesion and national unity in Australia.

