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International Press Release

Kathak Artist Nilima Devi is Awarded MBE

Smt. Nilima Devi Menski, the founder and Artistic Director of the Centre for Indian Classical Dance (CICD) in Leicester, and an Overseas Citizen of India, has been awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) in the Queen's New Year Honours List 2013. The award has been granted in recognition of Nilima Devi's sustained contributions to the study and appreciation of Indian classical dance in the UK and abroad for over 30 years.

Nilima Devi was born in Vadodara, India and studied Kathak (B.Mus. (1973) and M.Mus. (1975) with Distinctions) at the College of Performing Arts, M.S. University, Vadodara under the tutelage of Pandit Sunderlal Gangani. Her dance career began in Germany where she performed extensively between 1979-1980 before settling in the UK, where she founded the Centre for Indian Classical Dance in Leicester in 1981. She has pioneered several programmes with public and private bodies for the study and appreciation of Indian arts in Britain. A key influence on her artistic and choreographic works has been the late Pandit Durgalal (Delhi), Smt. Kumudini Lakhia (Ahmedabad), and the late Smt. Pandita Rohini Bate (Pune), who were guest resident artists at CICD.

Some of Nilima Devi's major productions such as the *Ugly Duckling* (1989), *Triangle* (1991), *Rainbow* (1993) (choreographed by Kumudini Lakhia), *Melory* (1995), *Dances of the Spheres* (1999) (choreographed by Roshan Date), *Flaming Feet* (2000), *Kathak Tells a Story* (2001), *Images* (2004) and *Urjah* (2007), have made cutting-edge strides in transcending cultural and artistic boundaries whilst retaining the spirit of Kathak dance.

In addition to nurturing more than 20,000 students in Indian dance through teaching in British schools, Nilima Devi has pioneered projects such as *Sinjini* (2009), a DVD on Indian music and dance produced using UK-based artists, and *Karman*, (2012), a book documenting the living history of arts amongst the Indian diaspora community. Nilima Devi has also produced accomplished British-born dance artists, such as Aakash Odedra, who has recently toured 'Rising' with the British Council in India, a solo piece choreographed by Russell Maliphant, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Akram Khan.

The MBE is to be presented by the Queen of England at a special ceremony to be held at Buckingham Palace in London in 2013. Nilima Devi is married to Professor Werner Menski, a Sanskritist and internationally renowned expert on Indian laws at the University of London.

For further details visit www.cicd.org.uk and the CICD Channel on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/CICDUK>.