



In the mix: Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, centre, as a witch from Macbeth

Stars of the 18th century stage return to theatreland

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CELEBRATED actresses of the 18th century are to be honoured with a major exhibition.

The **National Portrait Gallery**, in the heart of London's theatre district, brings together more than 50 pictures of stars such as Sarah Siddons, Nell Gwyn and Kitty Clive.

The show explores a period when theatrical fame helped make women a subject in their own right for the first time. Portraits by Thomas Gainsborough, Sir Joshua Reynolds and others will go on display with mass-produced caricatures and prints.

A highlight will be a new acquisition, *Three Witches from Macbeth* by Daniel Gardner in which three society ladies including Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire – the Whig hostess played by Keira Knightley in the film *The Duchess* – are depicted as Shakespeare's wild women.

■ *The First Actresses: Nell Gwyn to Sarah Siddons* will run from October 20 to January 8, 2012, admission £11.

