

## The man who inspired me

Actress **Jill Halfpenny** is starring in the new West End production of *Legally Blonde* at the Savoy Theatre. Here, she tells us how a theatre director gave her a **confidence boost** she's never forgotten.



'When I was 12, I went along to an audition advertised in the local paper, and was chosen to perform in director Ken Hill's production of *Sweeney Todd* at the Newcastle Playhouse. I'd done some acting before, but this was my first experience of working in a professional company. Ken treated all of us kids like adults, giving us proper direction without being patronising. I got a real thrill out of that, and for the first time felt like a "real" actor.

After doing the first few performances, I was in the theatre bar with my chaperone and she told me that Ken had said: "That girl's going to be a big success." Up until that point I had never been singled out in that way and it gave me the most incredible feeling.

Ken's words made me realise it's important to give praise, especially to children. Adults have such power, and children are like sponges. Ken died relatively young, in 1995, and I felt really sad. I would have loved to have worked with him again during my adult career - but most especially, I would have told him what those words meant to me, and how I will never forget them.'