

# Tragedy that put Millie back on the stage at 79

Grieving mum takes to Edinburgh Fringe to reveal her daughter's sad story



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enjoying herself, but then she would fall ill again."

When Karen was well, she had the world at her feet. Sparky and intelligent, she played the assistant to her younger brother's award-winning magic act.

But the good times were punctuated by worrying episodes of severe mental illness. Millie is convinced Karen suffered awful reac-

tions to some drugs which made her feel worse, but she felt it was always almost impossible to get doctors to understand.

The family owned a flat in Bournemouth, Dorset, and would go there for breaks. In Karen's room there was a swivel window

**FRINGE: Millie, main, and left, in Cannes on a stop on the 1985 cruise with Jeffrey, Karen, Daniel and Paul**

with a faulty catch, which was easy to open.

It appears Karen stood on a chair, slipped on a silky piece of clothing and fell to her death through the window.

"The paramedic told me she died instantly," said Millie.

"She slipped and fell and didn't even cry out. It was that quick.

"She had been feeling dizzy and said she had not taken her sleeping pill." There was no indication Karen had intended to harm

herself and at an inquest her death was recorded as accidental.

Even after all these years, the pain of her traumatic death still haunts Millie, whose husband Jeffrey, a university lecturer, died in 2001.

She is hoping the powerful theatrical experience will give voice to her belief that the side effects of strong prescription drugs can have a devastating and destructive impact.

Karen's bad reactions to several drugs inspired her mother to set up a charity to help those with similar problems. "The impact is still with us, despite the passage of time," Millie says.

"This is a one-woman show about how adverse psychological reactions to medicines for physical ailments can drastically change the lives of victims and their families." Millie only decided

to become an actress at the age of 40 after successfully running the family property company.

She did a nine-month tour with Chaim Topol in *Fiddler on the Roof*, which played in Edinburgh in 1994.

As well as founding the Eastend Theatre Company, Millie also founded the charity APRIL, or Adverse Psychiatric Reactions Information Link, and through that she helps scores of people whose loved ones have been badly affected by medication.

● *Cruise to Hell with Millie Kieve will be on at the Space on the Mile, Radisson Hotel Blu, High Street, Edinburgh, today and nightly until Saturday. Venue box office: 0131 510 2382 Fringe box office: 0131 226 0000. For details about APRIL go to [april.org.uk](http://april.org.uk) and [eastendtheatrecompany.org.uk](http://eastendtheatrecompany.org.uk)*