

I think I am beginning to emerge from the awfulness of my perforated appendicis. The hospital stay was unspeakable, Apart from all the tubes, three of them draining different bits and a couple for IV fluids and antibiotics, I had to contend with two crack addicts causing mayhem in the ward, an East End gangster who shared with us his predilection for sticking knives in people, nurses in a permanent state of chaos, doctors who shut down on Friday lunch and didn't reappear until Monday morning, noise all the time from visitors, day staff, night staff, monitoring machines and TVs! Yes, each bed has its own TV and, although headphones are provided, the sets are also equipped with external speakers. It was very, very difficult to get any sleep. My lungs filled up with fluid. I actually thought I was going to die in there and I didn't care

Still, I'm back at my desk now and even visiting the opera. We saw La Fanciulla del West on Wednesday. A while ago an opera singer berated us for not knowing anything about the performers we were about to see. "Find the ones you like and follow them around", she said, clearly hailing from the Romany tradition. Nevertheless, as a result, I now keep a database of all the operas we see, the performers, conductors etc. What has surprised me is how many of the singers we've seen before. About three quarters of the cast for La Fanciulla del West we'd seen in previous operas. And there are two chaps, Robert Lloyd and Graeme Broadbent, who practically live at the ROH!

But, back to the task in hand. It's very difficult to express just how touched I was by your thoughtfulness and kindness in sending me the box of HMV classics. We have listened to lots of them and they have helped (along with the cricket, of course) enormously. In fact we have banished the TV from our country cottage the easier to listen to more of them! So, a huge thank you and bless you for being so considerate