The prized possession you value above all others... My bed. It's incredibly comfortable. It's only a single with an old brass bedstead that was given to my daughter Sophie (actress Sophie Thompson) when she was 18, but the mattress is Tempur foam, which was developed by NASA and moulds to your body.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Giving up the piano when I was 16. I'd had lessons and loved playing, but I began devoting all my time to studying to become a doctor.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd take my best friend Mildred on a tour of the islands of Scotland – by kayak! We'd paddle to Egg, Rum, Muck and Eigg and tow a dinghy behind us full of Puligny-Montrachet wine and catch lobster, langoustines and crab. Then I'd magically arrive in Quito in Ecuador for a sundowner drink and end the day at home in West Hampstead with my four grandchildren having a roast beef dinner with Yorkshire pudding made by my other daughter Emma (actress Emma Thompson) and Sophie. We'd have all the trimmings and drink some nice Chateauneuf-du-Pape.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Chocolate raisins. I don't have to worry about my weight – I'm 80 so it's too late to care about things like that – but once I start I eat rather too many.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... All Quiet On The Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque. I first read it in one sitting when I was 19 and stayed up until 3am sobbing. It was so devastating and really took me to the horrors of the First World War. The philosophy that underpins your life... To find peace in each day. I've watched it with my grandchildren many times and love it because it's so witty and enchanting.

The person who has influenced you most... A lady called Jenny McAra, who was my first proper teacher, for two years when I was nine. I admired and respected her – she taught me so much about listening and learning.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The Russian mystic Grigori Rasputin. I'd love to know what he was up to with the Tsar's family and how he really died.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A wonderful Frost's chocolate raisin bar. I don't have the patience to cut it up, so when I had a four-grandchildren cuddle it, I popped it in a dish and was about to have it – but then my four grandchildren were ill in 1982. Both were 53 and they died within months of each other.

The song that means most to you... Miss Otis Regrets by Cole Porter. It moves me whenever I hear it.

The happiest moment you will cherish for ever... When I bought my cottage in Ardentinny, Scotland, 50 years ago. It's the most stunning place in the world.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my husband (actor of The Magic Roundabout Eric Thompson) and my brother, James, were ill in 1982. Both were 53 and they died within months of each other.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a painting by the Dutch artist Vilhelm Hammershoi, and look at it in awe.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Have to keep laughing.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd be taken to the crematorium by dustcart with a jazz band playing. I want my ashes scattered in a glen near my home in Scotland and I'd like an unsuitable cart with a jazz band playing. At 11 I was convinced I had a life-threatening disease, so I devoted myself to becoming a doctor. I threw it in at 17 when I found out it was anaemia.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm Phyllida Lloyd, the director of Mamma Mia!. People tell me they loved that show and the film. They're crestfallen when I say I had nothing to do with it!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Discovering at 17 that I didn't have a life-threatening disease! From the age of 11 I was convinced I was ill. That made me devote what I thought remained of my life to becoming a doctor. Then I found out I was only anaemic. I threw in medicine and became a theatrical designer.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a painting by the Dutch artist Vilhelm Hammershoi, and look at it in awe.

The poetry that touches your soul... My my by Phyllida Law is published by Headline and should be perfect! It's fine to have faults. It's much better.

The person who has influenced you most... A lady called Jenny McAra, who was my first proper teacher, for two years when I was nine. I admired and respected her – she taught me so much about listening and learning.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When I bought my cottage in Ardentinny, Scotland, 50 years ago. It's the most stunning place in the world.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my husband (actor of The Magic Roundabout Eric Thompson) and my brother, James, were ill in 1982. Both were 53 and they died within months of each other.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a painting by the Dutch artist Vilhelm Hammershoi, and look at it in awe.

The philosophy that underpins your life... To keep laughing.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd be taken to the crematorium by dustcart with a jazz band playing. I want my ashes scattered in a glen near my home in Scotland and I'd like an unsuitable cart with a jazz band playing. At 11 I was convinced I had a life-threatening disease, so I devoted myself to becoming a doctor. I threw it in at 17 when I found out it was anaemia.