

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's dancer and choreographer Wayne Sleep

The prized possession you value above all others... A drawing by David Hockney of a stage curtain he painted for a gala I organised in 1977. It's a beautiful abstract of dancers. We've been friends since the 1960s.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not growing taller. I'm only 5ft 2in, which stopped me getting classic leading roles. The upside was that new roles were written for me.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Doodling in my appointments book. My PA can't decipher where I'm supposed to be.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... A Midsummer Night's Dream has been such a positive in my life. I've played Puck in the ballet, play and opera around the world.

The priority activity if you were the invisible man for a day... I'd float by Usain Bolt as he wins 100m Olympics gold. I'd love to witness winning from his perspective.

The pet hate that makes our hackles rise... Snogging in public. Such things should be private.

Right: 1978's *La Cage Aux Folles*. Above right: champagne. Far right: the Great Wall of China

The person who has influenced you most... Ninette de Valois, who founded the Royal Ballet. She was my teacher and mentor at the Royal Ballet School.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Serge Diaghilev, who founded the Ballets Russes in 1909. He got together the best composers, dancers and artists and changed the face of performance.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Don't let negative thoughts take over the positive.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Iaido martial arts, which is Samurai sword-fighting. It's such a precise skill, full of Japanese history. I've been training for a couple of months because I may need it for a show. I can't reveal any more!

The film you can watch time and time again... The 1978 French movie *La Cage Aux Folles*. It's so rich in imagination and always makes me laugh, especially when the men do the can-can.



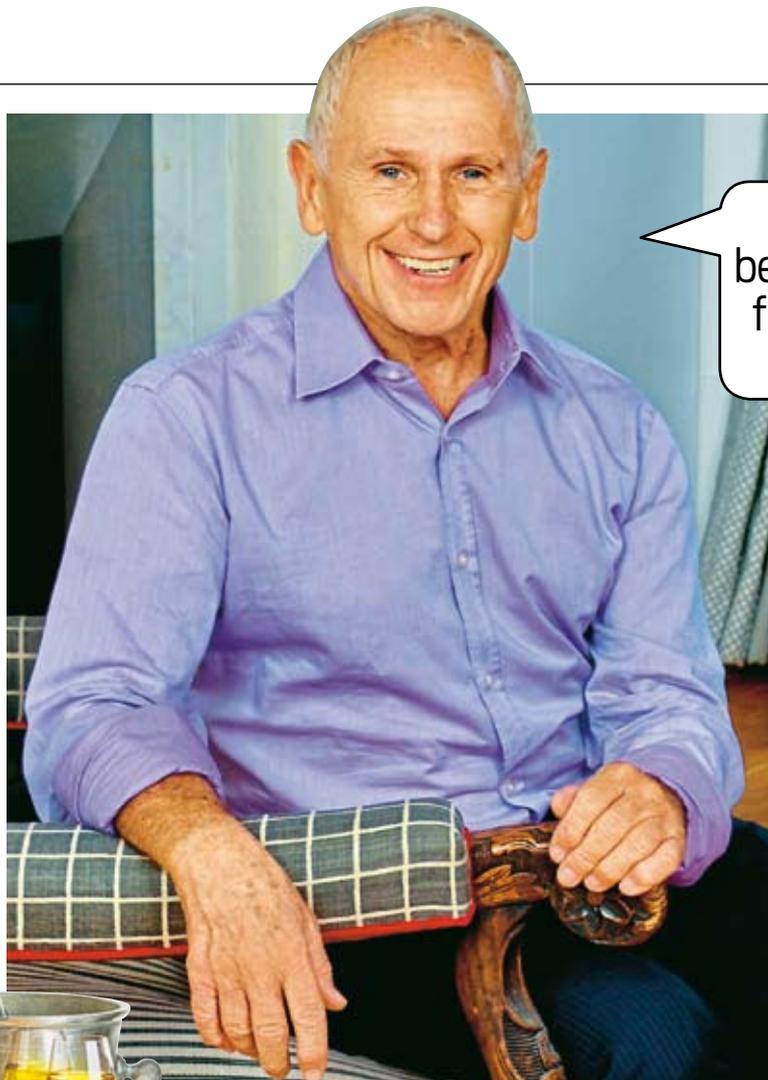
The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A specially made gold Cartier necklace given to me for my 20th birthday. It went missing years later.

The unending quest that drives you on... Doing workshops to inspire children to dance.

The poem that touches your soul... The passage from Shakespeare's play *Cymbeline* that begins 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun'. It reminds me that we all face the same fate – death.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm the eternal clown. For years I was expected to perform for people and I played along, but I won't do it any more. There's a quiet, serious side to me. I'm also very private.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Getting into the Royal Ballet School. I was up against 250 kids for two scholarships and came from a working-class upbringing in Hartlepool. The screenwriter Lee Hall told me that my autobiography was his inspiration for the film *Billy Elliot*.



'I've been training to become a Samurai sword fighter for months – it's such a precise skill'

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Dancing to Uptown Girl with Princess Diana at the Royal Opera House in 1985. She came on stage and I heard an intake of breath by 2,500 people! We got eight curtain calls and as we walked off she said, 'This doesn't mean you'll get an OBE!'

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of my mother Joan in 1994, aged 72. She died from paracetamol poisoning – she'd been taking it for arthritis. She was very talented and could have had a singing career, but sacrificed everything for me.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To be a graphic designer and create posters for shows. I still have some I drew when I was at school and they're not bad.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Work hard, play hard and remember to laugh. Keeping your sense of humour is very important.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd have lots of Christmas carols, especially Silent Night, and Country Gardens by Percy Grainger. And I want everyone to make a donation to my charity, so it'll carry on long after I'm gone.

The way you want to be remembered... As someone who opened doors to all forms of dance.

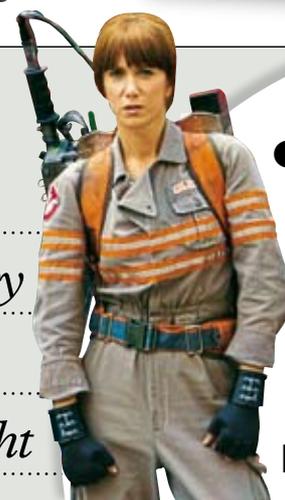
The Plug... The Wayne Sleep Foundation raises money to help talented youngsters train for the theatre and dance. Visit waynesleep.org.

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Kristen Wiig leads an all-female team in the new Ghostbusters film – in cinemas from Monday. David Bowie Is, a documentary about the V&A's blockbuster 2013 show, is in Vue cinemas on Thursday only. And Take That play London's Hyde Park tonight



NEXT WEEK

- June Whitfield, starring in *Ab Fab: The Movie* at 90, invites us into her home
- A taste of the Med in part two of our Elizabeth David recipe series
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings