

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's champion figure skater Robin Cousins

The prized possession you value above all others... My ice skates. I only have one pair at a time, which I buy off the peg for about £200. I still enjoy skating but the best part is helping others do the things my body can't do any more.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not going to drama school. Singing and dancing was my first love and I dreamed of being like Gene Kelly. It got sidelined when I got into skating at the age of nine.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Tuesdays With Morrie by US sports journalist Mitch Albom. It's about his conversations with his former sociology professor Morrie Schwartz shortly before he died. It's inspiring.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd stand alongside the great movie music composer and conductor John Williams as he creates his magic with his orchestra.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Speculative debating. I hate it when people get worked up about a subject they can't change. Life's too short, why bother?

Right: An American In Paris. Above right: Ben & Jerry's ice cream. Far right: Machu Picchu

The person who has influenced you most... My father Fred. He was such a solid support and gave me unconditional love. Even when the family had to go without things because of my skating he kept us all jogging along. He died from a heart attack in 2008 when he was 84.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Ben & Jerry's ice cream. Any flavour will do – if it's in the house it has to be eaten.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... I'd love to meet the director Vincente Minnelli – Liza's dad – who was married to Judy Garland. He worked with some of the greats of the 1940s and 50s, so he could tell incredible stories.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Make as many mistakes as you need to, just not the same one a second time.

The film you can watch time and time again... An American In Paris from 1951 with Gene Kelly is a perfect movie, with Gene at his best. I have no idea how many times I've seen it, but it's a great winter warmer.



'I wish I could have my knees back. I've had eight operations and they're held together with screws and metal strips'



The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...

Conducting. I'm fascinated by the skill and touch of a great conductor.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My knees! They started to get wrecked when I was 16, with cartilage damage. I've had eight operations and they're held together with screws and metal strips.

The unending quest that drives you on... To seek out challenges. Complacency doesn't exist in my vocabulary.

The poem that touches your soul... Invictus by William Ernest Henley is so powerful. Those final lines – 'I am the master of my fate/I am the captain of my soul' – chime with my belief that you should never give up.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd take over the money-printing presses of the richest countries and give money to people who really need it.

The song that means most to you... Life Is A Happy Road, sung by Gene Kelly. It always makes me smile.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That when I act in the theatre I'm there because I'm a celebrity. I go through the audition process like everyone else.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Becoming British junior figure skating champion at 14. Within a year I had an international career.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd start with a walk on the beach with my French bulldog Monty. My partner Mark and I would have coffee and croissants in the Marais district of Paris, then we'd go to a private viewing at the Louvre. Afterwards I'd visit Machu Picchu, the Inca site in Peru. It's hardly local cuisine, but I'd have a Caesar salad with dry white wine for lunch, before spending all afternoon at Iguazu Falls in Brazil. I'd be in Brighton at sunset because there's nowhere better to watch the sun go down. We'd spend the night partying in Rio during Carnival.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Standing on the podium after getting my Olympic gold medal at Lake Placid in 1980 when I looked over at Mum and Dad and my team. I gave them a knowing smile and that moment is etched in my brain.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my mum Jo died in 2006. She was 82 and had angina. One day my dad got up to make her a cup of tea. He came back and she'd died in her chair. It was awful.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To star in a show on Broadway. It doesn't have to be a musical, just a show I'm right for.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Surround yourself with people who tell you what you need to hear, not what they think you want to hear.

The order of service at your funeral... There will be no order! It's not something I've ever contemplated, but I'll insist it's not a solemn event. I want it to be fun and light, with people having a drink and sharing happy memories.

The way you want to be remembered... As someone who coped and who enjoyed coping.

The Plug... Robin is the high performance manager for the National Ice Skating Association for the European and World Championships 2017. He also supports Demelza, which provides hospice care for children. demelza.org.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



A very **HAPPY NEW YEAR** to you all!

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- Shaun Evans on the new series of Endeavour
- Warming winter soups that'll bowl you over
- Monty Don's pick of the perfect houseplants to light up January