



From top: Salzburg, Bette Midler and Lily Tomlin in *Big Business*, George III, a box of Maltesers, on *Strictly* with Flavia Cacace, Anna Karenina and the Queen Mother

The prized possession you value above all others... My 12 volumes of *The Victoria History Of The County Of Middlesex*, where I was brought up. The books give a wonderfully in-depth history and mean everything to me.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Waiting until I was 60 and on *Strictly* before learning to dance. I should have done it decades ago because it's set my soul free.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I'm an Aquarian and good on my own, so I'd spend the day by myself. I'd wake at dawn in Salzburg, drive through the Tyrol to Innsbruck for coffee, then have breakfast by the lake in Lucerne, Switzerland. I'd have lunch in St Petersburg and stroll around the Hermitage Museum. I'd check in to the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in LA and relax before seeing a matinée in London. Then I'd grab a salt beef sandwich in the Star Deli in New York before a Broadway show. I'd have supper somewhere Mediterranean and close the day with a concert in Vienna.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Maltesers. I open a box and won't close it again until it's empty.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *Anna Karenina* deeply moves me. Russian novels sum up the joyous and tragic sides of me.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd sit in the middle of an orchestra during a performance of Jacques Offenbach's operetta *Orpheus In The Underworld* and be utterly absorbed by the music.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Bigots whose minds are closed and who play on people's prejudices.

The film you can watch time and time again... *Big Business* with Bette Midler and Lily Tomlin because it makes me *howl* with laughter.

The person who has influenced you most... I'd need two – my grandmothers Alice and Lily. Alice – who was my mother's mother – taught me manners. Lily had a great sense of fun.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... George III. I find the period leading up to the American War of Independence fascinating.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Use your potential. Not allowing your natural gifts to flourish will dampen your spirit.



'People think astrology's my only profession, but I was an actor and singer – I was in *On The Buses*'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's the turn of astrologer Russell Grant

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I'm really into statistics and I love lists because you get the facts, devoid of the opinions of others.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... I've never lost anything I care about. I'm a great hoarder. Everything gets a safe place.

The unending quest that drives you on... Helping others realise their potential. I love mentoring. My *Academy of Showbusiness* opens in Wales soon.

The poem that touches your soul... Lord Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, because of the line, 'Tis better to have loved and lost/ Than never to have loved at all. I've been with the same partner [his manager Doug Beaumont] for 40 years, but I see the beauty in that line.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That astrology was my first and only profession. I was an actor and singer long before that – I was on TV in *On The Buses*.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Presenting the Queen Mother with her astrological chart at the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition in 1978. From that moment on I was the 'astrologer royal'.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal all the outfits I wore on *Strictly* from the BBC's costume department.

The song that means most to you... The Coronation Scene And Finale from Ivor Novello's musical *King's Rhapsody*. I toured in that show for six months in the late 70s and it reminds me of happy times.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Meeting Princess Diana in 1984. She told me she watched me every morning presenting *Your Stars* on BBC Breakfast Time. She was captivating and made me feel special.

The saddest time that shook your world... Losing my grandmothers in the late 90s – Alice to Alzheimer's and Lily through old age. It sent me into a deep depression that lasted ten years. I began comfort eating and by 2009 I weighed 26st, which is when I began to sort myself out.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To have my own entertainment series on TV with a big orchestra, music, dance and acting – but *no* astrology!

The philosophy that underpins your life... Judge not lest you be judged.

The order of service at your funeral... I've reserved my plot at St Mary's Church, Harefield, Middlesex. I was raised in the village and was head choirboy. I want beautiful hymns, but also a bit of fun, so I'll make it fancy dress – with an emphasis on musicals.

The way you want to be remembered... He was fair, just and tolerant. And an entertainer who came back after everyone had written him off!

The Plug... I am currently starring as the Wizard in *The Wizard Of Oz* at the London Palladium. For tickets visit www.wizardofozthemusical.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Strictly winner Tom Chambers and Summer Strallen do *Fred and Ginger in Top Hat* at London's Aldwych Theatre. Star-studded superhero blockbuster *Avengers Assemble* is in cinemas now. And *Norah Jones*' new album *Little Broken Hearts* is out on Monday



NEXT WEEK

- Meet the most outrageous acts in the Britain's Got Talent live finals
- Damian Lewis on the final episode of *Homeland*
- Jamie Oliver makes seafood really sing
- PLUS Don't miss Britain's best TV listings guide