



From top: a Sicilian beach, a fine French red wine, reformer Martin Luther, Wham!, pungent Brie de Meaux, Kenneth Branagh as Henry V, and Princess Leia and Luke Skywalker in Return Of The Jedi

The prized possession you value above all others... A pair of cufflinks given to me when I was granted the Freedom of the City of London last year in recognition of my music educational work in the capital.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... I wish I'd sung in a cathedral choir when I was a young boy. I had a chance to be in my local church choir but was too busy with Scouts, sport and learning the piano.

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

I'd have breakfast with my wife Becky and our baby, Esther, at LA's Beverly Hills Hotel. We'd organise childcare for Esther and have a walk in the Scottish Grampians, followed by lunch in Saint-Emilion in south-west France with a fine bottle of wine. I'd sleep it off on a beach in Sicily, then look at Holbein's paintings in the National Portrait Gallery. Afterwards I'd put Esther to bed, listen to Mahler's 2nd Symphony at London's Barbican Centre and finish with a pub dinner with friends.

The temptation you wish you could resist... I love strong, fetid cheeses, the type that whimper in the corner of a room. A favourite is Brie de Meaux.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Shakespeare's play Henry V is a great story of leadership. I love the St Crispin's Day speech and even have the film with Kenneth Branagh as Henry on my iPhone. If I'm having a bad day, I watch a bit to inspire me.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd sit in the Cabinet room to watch how our politicians decide important matters.

The pet hate that always gets your back up... I can't stand rudeness. Unfortunately, I can't help being rude back!

The film you can watch time and time again... Return Of The Jedi. It sparked my Stars Wars obsession. I've seen the first three films at least 30 times – each. I love the heroic story of good triumphing over evil.

The person who has influenced you most... Richard McNicol, my mentor when I was with the London Symphony Orchestra. He told me, 'If you expect children to do something and give them the chance, they will rise to it and never let you down.'

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The 16th-century German priest



The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's TV choirmaster Gareth Malone

Martin Luther. He was a revolutionary who wrote hymns and incorporated music into religion for the people.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Always strive to be your best self rather than being negative.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I did clay pigeon shooting this year and loved it so much that I'm going to take it up.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... I've lost about

30 watches. I only buy cheap ones now as I know I won't own them for long.

The unending quest that drives you on... To attain perfection in music, but I know it's not achievable. It's the elusive nature of perfection that drives me on to the next performance.

The poem that touches your soul... The hymn Eternal Father, Strong To Save. We used to sing it at school on Remembrance Day. It's about asking God for help in times of great trouble.

Selling ice creams on Bournemouth beach when I was 16 was so awful, I knew then I wanted more from life

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm a bit of a girly nerd. I'm a bit more rounded than that – I think!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... I did some terrible jobs in the summer holidays after my GCSEs. One was selling ice creams on Bournemouth beach. My boss made me pick up cigarette ends in the sand, and I knew then that I wanted more out of life, so I threw myself into everything at school. I ended up getting two As and a B in my A-levels.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd rig a cashpoint to dispense endless cash.

The song that means most to you... Yesterday by The Beatles, but this could be replaced by my new single, Wherever You Are by the Military Wives' Choir. It's a powerful anthem and the source of so much personal pride.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The day I got a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of my grandmother Patricia was incredibly upsetting. She was an inspiring, witty, incisive character and I wanted to be like her.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To sing professionally at La Scala in Milan.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Music is life.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd be brought in to the sombre Thou Knowest Lord The Secrets Of Our Hearts by Purcell and end on a jolly note with Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go by Wham! I'd also like a wake with great red wine and a singsong.

The way you want to be remembered... I'd like people to listen to some music and say, 'Gareth introduced me to this...' That would be a great epitaph.

The Plug... Wherever You Are by the Military Wives' Choir is released on 19 December. It's already available to pre-order. Help it beat X Factor to be the Christmas Number One. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Dame Edna makes her panto debut in Dick Whittington at the New Wimbledon Theatre. Robert Downey Jr returns as

Sherlock Holmes in A Game Of Shadows – in cinemas now.

And the Glee cast's Christmas Album Volume 2 is in the shops



NEXT WEEK

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