

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 actor Christopher Biggins

The prized possession you value above all others... My paintings. I've been collecting for 50 years and have over 300 – ranging from David Hockney to amateur works by friends.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not being cast as George, the Prince of Wales, in the TV mini-series Prince Regent in 1979. I was tailor-made for it – not least because of my big calves – but it went to Peter Egan who had to wear padding on his legs!

The temptation you wish you could resist... Bread. My favourite meal is toast and my biggest mistake is ruining my main course in a restaurant by filling up on delicious bread.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Silence Of The Lambs by Thomas Harris. I read it at a friend's house in Tuscany in the 1990s and I was so terrified as I finished it in bed that I couldn't get up to close the door.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Cyclists in London. They're arrogant and they break the law.

Right: Julie Andrews in The Sound Of Music. Above right: a Penny Black stamp and a stamp album. Far right: Monet's Le Grand Canal.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...

I'd spend the day with David Beckham. I met him at The Ivy once and he was enchanting. He said he was thrilled to meet me as he loved On Safari and Rentaghost when he was growing up.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Stamps. I collected thousands from when I was seven to 16 and a Penny Black was my jewel. The collection went missing years ago, but I still love stamps.

The film you can watch time and time again...

The Sound Of Music never fails to reduce me to floods of tears – it's a classic.

The person who has influenced you most... Ronnie Barker. I was Lukewarm in Porridge from the first series in 1974 and Ronnie was wonderful. He was such a generous actor who cared about what worked for the whole show. He didn't want all the great lines for himself.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Love everything you do – it's the secret to a happy life.



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The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Nero.

I played him in I, Claudius in 1976. He did terrible things, but I have a real affinity with him. I'd like to experience having 150 slaves.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A Royal Worcester figurine of a 1930s woman, which my father Bill gave to me in the 1970s. I later knocked it over and it smashed to pieces. I was devastated.

The unending quest that drives you on... To maintain my joy of life. I love my friends and everything I do. It's fantastic and I'm so lucky. I'm 69 now and I want to keep enjoying myself.

The poem that touches your soul... If by Rudyard Kipling, which my great-aunt Vi read to me when I was nine.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That since I'm always laughing, I must be shallow and frivolous. I have different depths – that doesn't mean you can't have fun.

The event that altered the course of your life and character...

For an ageing gay man to win I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here! in 2007 was most unexpected and extraordinary. I got love and affection from people across Britain, which still continues.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a Monet painting of Venice and put it in my drawing room. Stunning.

The song that means most to you... There's No Business Like Show Business by Ethel Merman. It's the anthem to show business, which is my life.

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

I'd spend it with my partner Neil beginning with breakfast at Soho House in New York. I'd have pancakes with bacon and maple syrup. We'd have coffee at Skylon Tower overlooking Niagara Falls, then lobster at Cafe Sydney by Sydney Harbour. We'd fly the magic carpet to The Ritz in London for afternoon tea. I'd start the evening with a Singapore

Sling at Bujera Fort in Udaipur, India, and then go to El Celler de Can Rocca in Girona, Spain, for dinner. I'd end the day at the Four Seasons in Florence.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Meeting Neil. Our first date was seeing Ghostbusters on Valentine's Day in 1985 and we had a civil partnership in 2006.

The saddest time that shook your world... Doing a walking pilgrimage to all the Stations Of The Cross in Jerusalem last year. It was so poignant and had a big impact on me. I'm a Christian so it was incredibly moving.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To play the piano. I had lessons until age 16, but I mostly gossiped with my teacher, Mr Lewis.

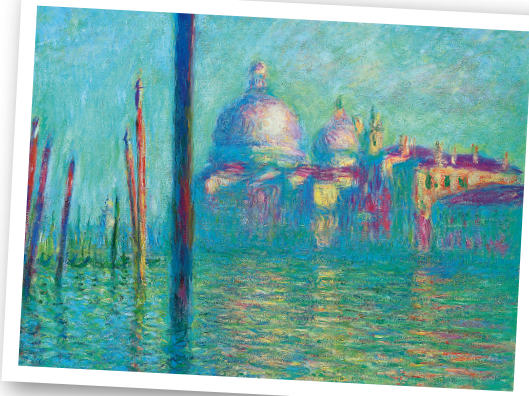
The philosophy that underpins your life... Don't be stupid and put on airs and graces – just be yourself.

The order of service at your funeral... Everyone must be in bright colours. I want my friend Peter Delaney, retired Archdeacon of London, to officiate a simple service at St Bartholomew-the-Great church in London, featured in Four Weddings And A Funeral. I'll be cremated and as the curtain closes My Way by Frank Sinatra will be played.

The way you want to be remembered... For laughing all the time.

The Plug... Christopher Biggins plays Widow Twankey in Aladdin at Richmond Theatre until 14 January. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Woody Harrelson's film *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* is out Friday. *The Music Which Inspired Girl From The North Country* by Bob Dylan is out the same day. And *Cirque Du Soleil's* show *OVO* opens at London's Royal Albert Hall tomorrow



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