The prized possession you value above all others... A painting of Victorian actor Henry Irving – a giant of theatre who was the first actor to be knighted – by the portraitist Edwin Long.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... That I never played Othello. I’m 75 and probably too old now.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I’d have breakfast at Les Deux Magots brasserie in Paris, then do a tour of famous graves: Oscar Wilde’s in the French capital, then Franz Kafka’s in Prague and war poet Rupert Brooke’s on the Greek island of Skyros. After lunch watching the street entertainment at Jamaa el Fna market in Marrakech, I’d pray at Jerusalem’s Wailing Wall for reconciliation between Israel and Palestine, and finally return to my home in London’s East End to be with my partner Clara Fischer and our beloved Bengal cat Apu (right). I’d mix margaritas while Clara prepared sushi for supper.

We’d spend the evening reading and listening to music and I’d finish by typing up my journal, which I keep most days.

The temptation you wish you could resist... I love exotic jewellery, probably because such baubles were denied to me when I was a child because we were poor. But as Oscar Wilde said, ‘The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it.’

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Last Of The Just – a novel by French writer André Schwarz-Bart, about the journey of 36 men, from biblical times to Auschwitz, who suffer for the sins of the world. It presents the belief that God is there, even in the most horrific situations.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I’d visit Shirley, my long-lost love from when I was ten. I’ve always wondered what became of her.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... The brutal murder of tigers and elephants for their body parts.

The film you can watch time and time again... Cyrano De Bergerac from 1950 starring José Ferrer – his acting technique is absolutely dazzling.

The person who has influenced you most... Franz Kafka. I read his novel The Metamorphosis – about a man who turns into a huge beetle – when I was 19 and it opened my imagination.

The figure from history for whom you’d most like to buy a pie and a pint... The great 19th-century Shakespearean actor Johnnie Ray. He was only 5ft 5in, but he almost terrified audiences with his trailblazing style, which once apparently reduced Lord Byron to tears.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Learn how to play a musical instrument – because then you’ll have a language that the whole world can understand.

The unlikely interest that enganges your curiosity... I adore over-elaborate track suits pimped up with velvet. I have about ten from designer shops in Hollywood.

The order of service at your funeral... I’d never again have to go around with the begging bowl to put on a play.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Pay attention to every action, no matter how small, because it will always have a big effect on someone.

The misapprehension about yourself... I was a deeply moving declaration of the efforts of the common working man. The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To own a theatre, so I could amend... The unqualified regret you wish you could erase... That I never played Othello.

The way you want to be remembered... I would have as a man who swam against the tide.

As a man who swam against the tide. The way you want to be remembered...

The order of service at your funeral... I’d never again have to go around with the begging bowl to put on a play.