



From top: the Trans-Siberian railway; bacon baguette; walking boots; Tim (right) with Andrew Lloyd Webber in the Sixties; the House of Lords; and Kenneth Williams

The prized possession you value above all others... An original Dictionary Of The English Language by Dr Samuel Johnson from 1755. I bought it at auction 12 years ago for about £25,000.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... I wouldn't know where to begin. Whatever I did yesterday!

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

I'd like to spend the entire time on the Trans-Siberian Railway – the scenery is supposed to be breathtaking. And you can do so much on a rail journey – read, chat – yet all the while you are being taken on an extraordinary trip. I would take my 12-year-old daughter, Zoe, for company.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Bacon sandwiches, preferably in a baguette with lots of butter, but no sauce. They are appallingly unhealthy, but I actually have no intention of resisting them. I am all in favour of not denying oneself such pleasures.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Bible. I am not particularly religious but it is such an unendingly fascinating book. Whenever I dip into it, whether for work or simply out of curiosity, it always tells me something new. How many books can do that every time?

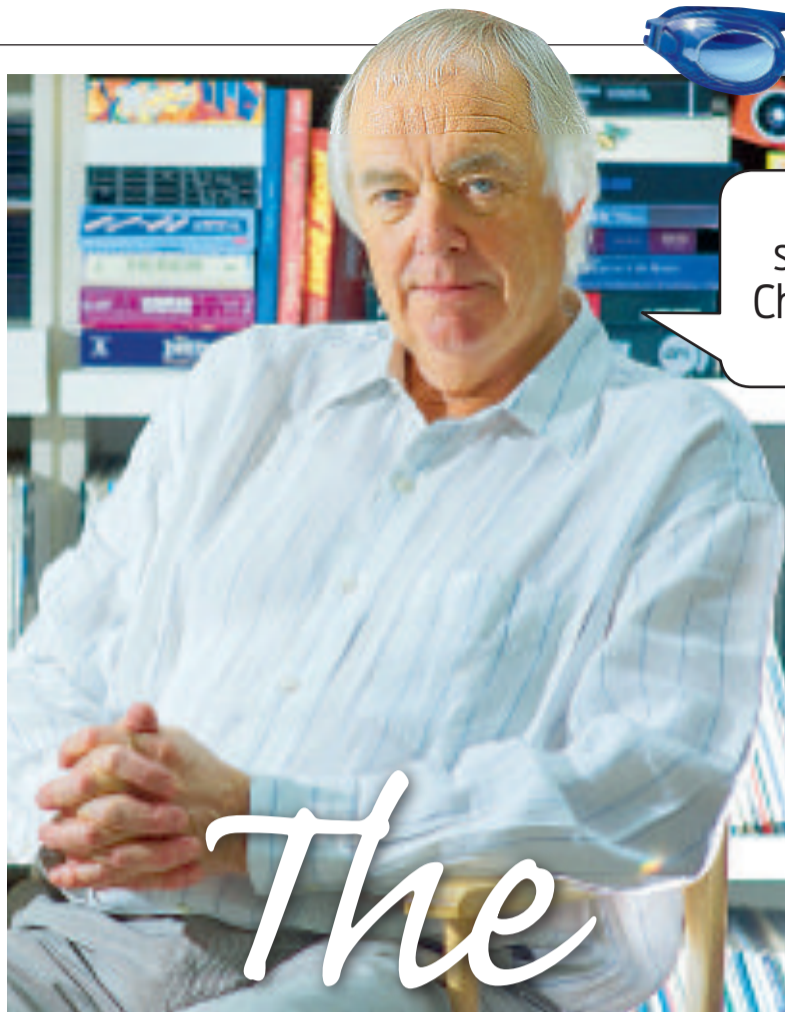
The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I would go to the House of Lords or Commons and interrupt debates about climate change. I'm not saying climate change isn't happening, but the sceptics aren't being heard, while the Government spends billions on wind turbines that are useless and ruin the countryside.

The life of another with whom you would gladly trade places... Roger Bannister. I'd love to have been the first man to run a mile in under four minutes.

The film you can watch time and time again... Paths Of Glory by Stanley Kubrick. I saw it when it came out in 1957, and Kirk Douglas is superb. It is about the futility of war and I always find it extremely moving.

The person who has influenced you most... My father, Hugh, who died in 1988 when he was 70. He was highly literate, generous, modest and funny.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... It would have to be Eva Peron. Having studied her in great detail when I wrote Evita with Andrew



'I've always fancied swimming the English Channel but I'm not sure I could do it now...'

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 lyricist Sir Tim Rice

Lloyd Webber in 1976, I would be intrigued to see how accurate my views were. And, of course, I'd ask her what she thought of the show!

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... I would impress upon them that all problems are solvable and countless other people have been through exactly the same things.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Prime numbers and statistics. I even read books about

mathematics, which is a bit silly, really.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A letter written by Kenneth Williams in 1988. At the time I was stuck in New York working on the show Chess, which was a shambles. The brighter moments came while reading one of Williams's books, so I decided to write him a fan letter. He wrote back the most wonderful letter. Three weeks later he died, and in my carelessness the letter got thrown away.

The unending quest that drives you on... Staying alive – life itself is a quest.

The poem that touches your soul... Ozymandias by Shelley. It is a reminder that however great you are in life, everyone fades to nothing in the end.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Meeting Andrew Lloyd Webber in 1965. I had gone to pitch a book to a publisher, who then suggested I meet this young composer and gave me Andrew's address in South Kensington. When we finally met, we clicked... and look what happened.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I would shoot some evil tyrant. There are enough of them in the world.

The song that means most to you... 18 Yellow Roses by Bobby Darin. It is about a father and his daughter, and I am a bit of a sucker for that sort of thing.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The day three years ago when I completed walking the length and breadth of England. Myself and two friends did it as a personal challenge in various stages over 12 years and finally finished at Land's End. It was a wonderful experience.

The saddest time that shook your world... Any death is sad, and obviously one's parents dying was difficult, but I wouldn't like to say one was harder than the other.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I have always fancied swimming the English Channel but I am not sure I could do it now.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Always try to get on with people.

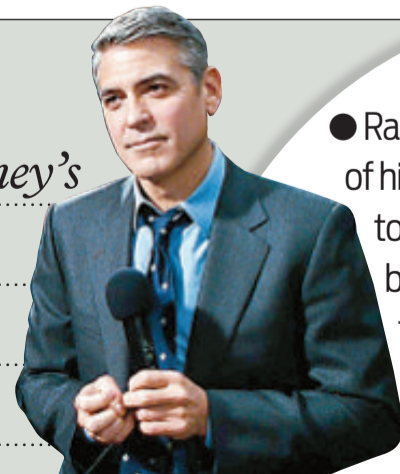
The order of service at your funeral... I wouldn't want it to be a gloomy service, but I'm also not keen on turning every funeral into a wild party. All I ask is that a song by The Everly Brothers features somewhere.

The Plug... The Lion King, for which Sir Tim wrote the lyrics to Elton John's music, is available in 3D on Disney Blu-ray and DVD from 7 November. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

You're spoilt for choice at the cinema this week as George Clooney's new political thriller, The Ides Of March, takes on Steven Spielberg's The Adventures Of Tintin. Or grab a copy of Florence + The Machine's album Ceremonials, out Monday



NEXT WEEK

- Ralph Fiennes joins the cast of hit BBC comedy Rev
- How to throw a Bonfire Night banquet, plus Monty Don's tips for building the perfect bonfire
- And don't miss Britain's best TV listings