We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it’s the turn of actor Tom Conti

The prized possession you value above all others... My Yamaha grand piano. I bought it in 1980 for £6,000, a fortune then. I started playing when I was four and play, badly, whenever I can.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... That I didn’t become an orchestra conductor. Music was my first love, but then I joined drama school. The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I’d begin with a full monty breakfast in our garden in Hampstead, then I’d cap a 737 jet in the latest hi-tech flight simulator at Heathrow Airport – I dreamt of being a pilot when I was a boy. I’d have lunch at the Bauer hotel in Venice with my wife Kara and our daughter Nina [the ventriloquist] and her sons – Arthur, nine, and Drummond, two. After lunch, I’d listen to a rehearsal of Beethoven’s 9th Symphony by the Berlin Philharmonic in Berlin, then head to Paris for a concert at Salle Pleyel. Kara and I would have dinner at La Coupole, then check in to the best room at Hotel de Crillon. I’d end the day on the terrace overlooking Paris with an espresso, a Montecristo No.4 cigar and a glass of Rémy Martin brandy.

The temptation you wish you could resist... The four things that make up my dream combination: chocolate, coffee, brandy and cigars.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Summerhill School by Alexander Neill from 1960. It’s a remarkable book about educating children and it teaches you that you cannot win with discipline.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I’d follow Vladimir Putin around the Kremlin to see what he gets up to.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Camden Council’s planning department. I hate the way they kowtow to developers and let them do things to the terrible detriment of residents.

The film you can watch time and time again... The Graduate from 1967. The director Mike Nichols created such a ground-breaking film. And, of course, it was the first time we saw the incredible Dustin Hoffman.

The person who has influenced you most... Kara. We’ve been married for 47 years and she’s made me a much freer spirit. I was an ordinary thinker before I met her, but she made me think differently about the world.

The figure from history for whom you’d most like to buy a pie and a pint... St Paul. He started Christianity by creating the myth of Jesus. I don’t believe any of it, so I’d ask him why he made it up.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on... Like every other person, I’m not religious so I’d have a service for others to look after their children. The order of service at your funeral...

As told to Rob McGibbon

NEXT WEEK

- More exclusive pictures and stories from Downton Abbey
- Monty Don’s guide to the best bulbs to plant for spring
- Eat well for less... delicious recipes from Jamie Oliver’s new book
- Plus Britain’s best TV listings