



From top: Mt Etna seen from Taormina in southern Italy; All About Eve; champagne; Elsa the lion cub in Born Free; Anna Pavlova; the Moon; the guitar, which Ronni would love to be able to play

**The prized possession you value above all others...** A ballet shoe worn by Anna Pavlova. It was given to my great-grandmother three years after Anna died in 1931, by Anna's husband Victor Dandré. My mum gave it to me and I will hand it on to my daughters.

**The unqualified regret you wish you could amend...** I hardly know where to start! But I wish I could play an instrument well, especially piano or guitar.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** I'd have breakfast with my husband Gerard, looking at Mount Etna from Taormina in southern Italy. Then we'd go to the Marquesas Islands in the South Pacific with our children – Lily, six, and Elsa, three. I'd watch the wildlife at the Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania, then have dinner in Manhattan. I'd do a sketch on Saturday Night Live, then zip home to London.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Champagne. Any brand will do – I'm too chavvy to care.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert. It is beautifully written and the characters reach across time.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day...** I'd hitch a ride on a rocket to the Moon.

**The life of another with whom you would gladly trade places...** Aretha Franklin. To be able to sing with that degree of power is the ultimate skill.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** All About Eve is magnificent. The screenplay is sharp and witty and the performances are exemplary, especially Bette Davis, who's on top form.

**The person who has influenced you most...** Dustin Hoffman, who's been my hero since I was about eight. I was an oddball as a kid, and when I saw him in Little Big Man I related to him, as he was so vulnerable and off-beat.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was queen consort of both France and England in the 12th century. She had an extraordinary life, so I'd love a good natter with her.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** It's what's inside that counts. My daughters are bombarded with images of gorgeous women on TV, so I want them to know that kindness shines out, regardless of how people look.



Elephants fascinate me. I've been collecting little elephant figures since I was a child. I have 70 now.

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

*We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week, it's TV comedienne Ronni Ancona*

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Elephants fascinate me; they look as if they belong to another world. I've been collecting little figures of elephants since I was a child and I have about 70 now.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** My peace of mind. Having kids makes you worry more, but makes you less self-centred.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To be the best I can be. I'm quite

tough on myself and always fear I don't come up to the mark.

**The poem that touches your soul...** The Stolen Child by WB Yeats has a deep personal resonance. My baby son Seth was stillborn in 2006 and I read the poem at his funeral. When you suffer a loss of that magnitude you like to think they are a little angel somewhere. The essence of the poem is that fairies exist and they protect children from the ills of the world.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm just an impressionist. I'm an actress and comedienne who also does silly voices!

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Winning the Time Out Hackney Empire New Act of the Year award in 1993 allowed me to go into comedy professionally.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I am appalled at the money footballers and bankers earn, so I'd find a way to give their wealth to people who need it.

**The song that means most to you...** Born Free. I named Elsa after the lion cub from the film. It's a wonderful ode to doing your own thing in life. I want that for both my girls.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** My wedding day at the Oliver Messel suite at the Dorchester hotel in Mayfair. I never thought I'd get married so it was all a nice shock.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** Losing my little baby boy broke my heart.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To deliver a great comedic performance, full of pathos, in a film that would make people laugh and cry. It's a pipe dream because Hollywood has no end of kooky, young, beautiful actresses.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Success through chaos.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I'd lay on some champagne and have a bit of a circus – sad and funny. I suppose it would be a good time for Alistair McGowan to do his terrible impression of me. He does this hideously squawking Scottish accent with his arm flapping up and down.

**The way you want to be remembered...** As a woman who wasn't all there – but wanted to be!

**The Plug...** I'm supporting the Kleenex Balsam Coldline, by offering soothing words of sympathy in the voices of some of Britain's biggest celebrities. To listen, call free on: 0808 265 3358. ■

*As told to Rob McGibbon*

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PS...

*Shrek's mischievous Puss In Boots (aka Antonio Banderas) has his own movie – in cinemas now. Ben Miller stars in the classic Ealing comedy The Ladykillers at London's Gielgud Theatre. And Michael Bublé's take on the seasonal classics, Christmas, is out now*



**NEXT WEEK**

● Don't miss a thing with our essential guide to Christmas TV – all the drama, movies, soaps and sport over 72 pages of the most detailed and up-to-date listings ● PLUS Jamie Oliver's fun festive recipes for children