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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 tenor Russell Watson

about it. Rebecca got 11 GCSEs and Hannah always has her head in a book. **The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** I like reading analytical books like Freakonomics and Malcolm Gladwell's Blink. That's probably not what people expect me to read! **The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** I was mad on the football board game Super Striker when I was seven. I had tournaments with my pals and wrote programmes

and match reports. I kept them in a box but they vanished and I was devastated. **The unending quest that drives you on...** To keep improving at everything. I have an incredibly competitive nature, sometimes to my detriment. **The poem that touches your soul...** Poetry hasn't really entered my life, but lyrics are very important. Bernie Taupin's words to Elton John's Your Song are beautiful. That's a real soul-toucher. **The misapprehension about yourself**

you wish you could erase... That I'm still ill! I've been in remission four years. **The event that altered the course of your life and character...** The second tumour. A year after the first one I was back in hospital. Surviving it changed me fundamentally. My appreciation for family, friends and life quadrupled. **The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd steal Manchester United from Malcolm Glazer and give it to the fans. **The song that means most to you...** Nessun Dorma. It means so much to me and I know I can never get off stage until I have sung that song. **The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** Leaving hospital after the second tumour. I wanted to be out for Rebecca's 13th birthday. My nurse said it was impossible, but I proved her wrong. I cried on the steps speaking to reporters. It was a Rocky Balboa moment! **The saddest time that shook your world...** When a dear friend of mine called Bill Vickerman died of cancer three years ago. He was only 59 and we had some amazing laughs together. **The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To break America. Now is a good time because I'm reaching the peak age for a tenor – and Americans love a comeback story. **The philosophy that underpins your life...** The more you put in, the more you get out. **The order of service at your funeral...** I believe in God, so I'd want a church service and to be brought in to Nessun Dorma. I don't want people to be too jolly, so I'd have Intermezzo from Cavalleria Rusticana by Pietro Mascagni to get the tears going. Then Ding Dong The Witch Is Dead from The Wizard Of Oz as my coffin slid behind a curtain. That would make people smile and think, 'Yeah, that's our Russ.' **The way you want to be remembered...** As a nice bloke with a great voice. **The Plug...** Return Of The Voice: Live At The Royal Albert Hall is out on Lace DVD. Visit www.russellwatson.com. ■
As told to Rob McGibbon

The prized possession you value above all others... My house in Cheshire, which I bought four years ago. I do business from there and it's the epicentre of family life with my daughters, Rebecca, 17, and Hannah, ten. It's my sanctuary. **The unqualified regret you wish you could amend...** Not realising school was for learning. I saw it as a social event and left with one GCSE in English. **The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** I'd have a full English breakfast in bed with my girlfriend Louise [Russell is divorced from wife Helen], then burn it off playing tennis on Centre Court at Wimbledon against Andy Murray. I'd take family and friends to Pangkor Laut in Malaysia, an island owned by a friend. I'd have a steak at The Cut in Sydney, then back to Wembley to see Manchester United beat Barcelona 5-0 in the Champions League final. I'd end the day in bed with Louise watching a film with a bottle of vintage Krug. **The temptation you wish you could resist...** Chips! I'd have chips with most things, but have to watch my weight. **The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** The Gingerbread Man because it takes me back to my childhood and my kids love it. I still always feel sad and hope he won't get eaten. **The priority activity if you were the invisible man for a day...** I'd scare a few unscrupulous characters in the music industry. They know who they are! **The life of another with whom you'd trade places...** There isn't anybody. Even when I think of my illnesses [he survived two brain tumour operations in 2006 and 2007] I wouldn't change anything. I think I'm still here for a purpose – to sing and make people smile. **The film you can watch time and time again...** The Lion King. I'm much more emotional since my health problems and the last time I watched it, I sobbed so much my kids had to give me a hug! **The person who has influenced you most...** My mother Nola taught me that honesty, loyalty and integrity are the things that really matter in life. **The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** John Lennon. I'd want to know how he wrote so many hits. **The piece of wisdom you'd pass on to a child...** School is *not* a playground! A good education helps you make the right decisions, so I've been tough on my girls

From top: John Lennon, Pangkor Laut, chips, Manchester United win the Champions League, Andy Murray on Centre Court, The Gingerbread Man, vintage Krug and the Wicked Witch from The Wizard Of Oz

PS...

Ugly Betty's America Ferrera vamps up for a spell in Chicago at the Garrick Theatre. Dominic West stars in 1920s ghost story The Awakening, in cinemas now. And Andrea Bocelli's new album, Concerto: One Night In Central Park, is out Monday

NEXT WEEK

- Sparks fly as The X Factor's most controversial judge spills the show's secrets
- How to make the perfect Christmas pud on Stir-Up Sunday
- Jamie Oliver's risotto masterclass
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings

