



A HAND FOR THE KING: British pro skater Matt King demonstrates a handstand at his master class yesterday. TNP PHOTOS: LATASHNI GOBI NATHAN

Skating from the ramps to theatre

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Matt King has dislocated his shoulder once and both his ankles twice, broken his nose four times, and suffered broken toes and broken collarbones.

With his litany of injuries, you would think that this stunt skater from Britain would hang up his skates and call it a day.

Well, King, 33, did switch over to theatre - but he'll still be skating for a living.

He plays Trax in Starlight Express, a musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber, who composed The Phantom of the Opera and Cats.

The musical promises 3-D effects as well as daredevil stunts on roller skates. It is showing at the Grand Theatre MasterCard Theatres at Marina Bay Sands from Nov 13 to 24. Tickets start from \$65.

A self-professed adrenaline junkie, King comes from a family of skaters and picked up the sport at 12. He said: "I've learnt to be quite comfortable with injuries. Skating is not a sport, it's a lifestyle. Skating showed me who I am."

One of his worst injuries happened when he was grinding a ramp and hit his head on the corner of



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— Matt King, professional skater from Britain

a flight of stairs. He started bleeding from his head and was sent to a hospital, where he received 40 stitches for the wound. Another time, he broke his ribs and while still under medication, he competed in a skating competition and was placed third.

King got involved in theatre when he successfully auditioned for Starlight Express in 2004.

The transition from skate parks to the theatre was not easy, he said, even though he was used to media events, having done advertisements for MTV and Cartoon Network. He's also the man behind the Evian ad involving roller skating babies.

Doing theatre work, however, was different as he had to learn to do his own make-up, and roller skate in costumes. The switch from skating free-style to doing specific stunts was also difficult.

Though it seems like an odd jump in career choice for a professional skater, King said it was his passion and he loves what he is doing.

He held a master class on tricks and stunts at the skate park at Somerset yesterday morning.

President of Singapore Management University's skate club, Miss Ivfen Foong, 21, was excited to get an invitation to the master class.

She gushed: "We learnt a lot today and even levelled up three ramps."