

Stadium puts athletics on the fast track, says Elana Meyer

APHIWE DEKLERK

OLYMPIC silver medal winner Elana Meyer yesterday gave the newly refurbished Green Point Athletics Stadium in Cape Town the thumbs up.

The veteran long-distance runner said the new facility was “world class and it will inspire youth to join athletics”.

Meyer, who won silver at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, was one of the guests at a function to officially open the long-awaited stadium.

Situated next to Cape Town Stadium, which was built for the 2010 World Cup, the athletics stadium has been the subject of controversy after its completion was delayed for two years owing to the liquidation of construction com-

pany Filcon Projects.

Yesterday mayor Patricia de Lille cut the red ribbon to open the stadium and announced that it would host the World Triathlon Series in April.

Triathlon South Africa president Debbie Alexander said the stadium would be used for the transition between cycling and running, and for the finish.

She said the stadium had a beautiful backdrop and offered a good space for spectators.

The city paid R85-million for the facelift and the stadium can now seat 4 500 people.

It has a VIP suite, changing rooms for males and females, a large reception area and a grandstand.

It will be used by professional

and amateur athletes.

De Lille said: “The scale and quality of this stadium will mean that school children will be able to perform on the same track as Olympic athletes.”

“The young girls and boys who are dreaming of becoming the next global athletics icons now [have] the opportunity to make that dream a reality.”

School opera heals souls

Catharsis for pupils singing their stories

JEROME CORNELIUS

THE sound of melodic voices harmonising wafts from the hall.

“No shuffling!” shouts a stage director at the performers. “Posture!” she commands.

The singers stare intensely, holding their pose as they rehearse the new opera *Comfort Ye*.

The singers are Bloekombos Secondary School pupils from an impoverished community in Kraaifontein.

Comfort Ye is the result of the stories they wrote in 2013.

The opera, according to its pro-



PITCH PERFECT: Stage director Robert Lehmeier rehearses the opera 'Comfort Ye' with Bloekombos Secondary School pupils Picture: ADRIAN DE KOCK

“Alcoholic mothers will know how much they hurt their children

gramme, is about “love, loss, a chase, a murder, rumours of abuse, families divided, and an ultimate message of hope”.

It will be performed at Artscape on March 6, 7 and 8.

The school’s previous production, *The Fairy Queen*, was staged in Johannesburg and Cape Town in 2012, and again in Cape Town in 2013 through the Umculo festival.

“We felt our young chorus members were bringing so much of themselves to their stage roles that it was time to hand the creative process over to them,” said Shirley Apthorp, the festival

founder and director.

“So we began creative writing workshops with them in 2013.

They ended up with a pile of notebooks “absolutely full of extraordinary material, which Robert [Lehmeier] then turned into one coherent libretto”.

Besides librettist Lehmeier, the

production involves composer Cathy Milliken, Fatima Dike, who assisted with the writing, and Mimi Makapela, who translated Xhosa to English.

Mali Kwatsha, a young tenor, performs the song *What It Is Like To Grow Up Without a Mother*, about his alcoholic mother who

dumped him when he was a baby.

“It was very hard for me to write because I have never told anyone before. But when I wrote it, I felt a big relief,” he said.

“If others see my story, mothers who are addicted to alcohol will know how much they hurt children who grow up without them.”

His father raised him. “My father couldn’t afford nappies. He had to wash towel nappies,” he said.

Teacher Siyabulela Sulelo, who leads the 30-member choir, said: “They’re so positive now. So much so that some of them have shown an interest in studying opera.”

Businesses power down

FARREN COLLINS

BUSINESSES are becoming more energy savvy, and have saved enough electricity since 2011 to power up to 75 000 homes.

Nearly 600GWh of energy, worth approximately R344-million, was saved by companies that took part in the first phase of an energy efficiency project run by the National Cleaner Production Centre.

The centre was set up by the Department of Trade and Industry to “support industry in resource efficiency and cleaner production”.

Cape Town business Sockit reduced electricity consumption by 40% after consultants from the centre suggested that it should use paraffin instead of electricity to create the steam needed to make socks.

“My biggest power use was in boiling water to create steam,”

said Sockit director Eugene Dohm.

“We changed our steam-generating system from electricity to paraffin which saved us on power usage. That meant that I could buy more machines and make more socks. Instead of 50 machines, I am now running 80 with the same power supply from Eskom.”

The trade and industry department’s chief director of green industries, Gerhard Fourie, said many people scoffed at the project when it was launched five years ago.

“Now we can see how critical it is. With hindsight we are grateful for the foresight of those who first insisted on [it],” he said.

Ndivhuho Raphulu, the director of the National Cleaner Production Centre, said some recommendations had costs attached, but incentives and funding were available.

Bright ideas to see light of day

FARREN COLLINS

IF YOU’RE in the market for a better pair of pole-climbing shoes, or you want to hear someone speak while you’re underwater, you may soon be in luck.

Yesterday 12 innovators from the Western Cape were awarded R6.5-million to develop these and other ideas.

They were among 151 applicants to the Design Innovation Seed Fund launched almost a year ago by the Cape Craft and Design Institute.

Other innovations that made the cut included an automatic bag-packing machine and a solar-powered pool cleaner.

Stroketeck developed a bone conduction headset that allows swimmers to listen to someone while underwater. It can be used by coaches to give instructions.

The co-developer of the product, Thys Pretorius, said the cheek-bone-mounted device allowed the skull to act in place of eardrums.

“It uses a similar method to what



AQUA-EARS: The device that allows swimmers to hear underwater

Beethoven used when he went deaf,” said Pretorius.

The latest version of the product includes a music player.

Ajax Manufacturing, led by operations manager Ann Cole, has developed lightweight aluminium shoes for “professionals” who climb poles — the kind used for electrical or telephone lines.

“What’s in the market place currently is clunky,” said Cole. “Our shoes allow you to stand on the same level as if it were a platform.”

The craft and design institute’s Winston Richards said the imme-

diated target was for the products to get closer to commercialisation.

“The opportunity for success for these products is very good. They went through a rigorous selection process that looked at product innovation, commercial viability and the team’s ability to deliver.”

#TO THE POINT

What invention would rock your world?

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