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# MCC student earns national award for sound design skills

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Courtesy Mesa Community College

### Jessica Thompson

Mesa Community College student Jessica Thompson earned recognition from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for her sound design work on a fall MCC performance. [Courtesy Mesa Community College]

Posted: Sunday, April 27, 2014 7:30 am  
By Eric Mungenast, Tribune

Mesa Community College student Jessica Thompson's training in the arts focused almost entirely on the visuals. That, however, didn't prevent her from winning a national competition for her skills at adding an audio element to a fall MCC performance.

The recognition Thompson, who attended Desert Vista High School in Ahwatukee, received was the top theater sound design award at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival hosted last weekend in Washington, D.C. Her award came from her work in the community college's product of "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," which occurred in fall 2013. She was one of two MCC students to do so: Higley High School graduate Lindsey Halfhill joined her in Washington for her work as a costume designer.

"I was very, very surprised because it was my first design that I'd done," Thompson said. "I still can't believe it."

The surprise actually began before earning the national recognition, as she took first place in the regional competition in Los Angeles. Winning that portion of the competition required her to beat out competitors from more than 54 higher learning institutes, and a press release from MCC said Thompson competed against students enrolled in four-year institutions and graduate programs at both levels of competition.

Thompson's duties in the performances at MCC and local elementary schools involved

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recording sounds to complement the action on the stage, sounds organic to the performance's setting. The purpose, she said, was to "immerse the children so they could forget where they are" during the show.

It's a little different from what Thompson has done in her educational experience. She actually changed majors during her undergraduate days at Arizona State University – degree pursuits included architecture, interior design, art history and print making – before earning her bachelor's in fine arts degree in ceramics. The roving makes sense given Thompson's life-long interest in creating things

in artistic fashion.

Finding a fit for all of those areas of study isn't easy, but Thompson discovered a unique way of employing all of her skills after she enrolled at MCC and started in the school's theater and film arts department.

"It's benefited me now because I can use these things for set design," she said.

Plus, she's had an opportunity to continue that interest in everything by working on various aspects of stage design. She said she likes the collaborative nature that comes from designing a set.

Thompson wants to continue to dive into that field, as she has plans to go to graduate school in January 2015 or shortly thereafter and earn a degree in theater design. She's not 100 percent sure of where she'll end up, but one option she expressed interest in is the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, which she said has a very good program.

Her award from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival should help – she called it a nice entry on her resume – but she said the win is a greater reflection on MCC's program and the education she's received.

At the very least, Thompson's time at MCC has provided her an entry into theatrical arts and stage design.

"And I've loved it ever since."

Contact writer: (480) 898-5647 or emungenast@evtrib.com

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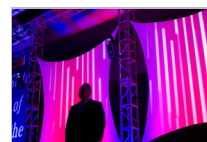
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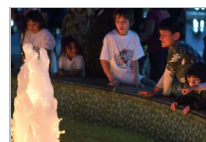
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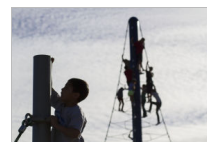
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