

like channeling than impression.

But it wasn't just celebrity imitations at which Francisco excels. He also created characters of his own, like homeless teens talking on cell phones, or Native American storytellers adapting their tales to the age of the casino, that took on vivid and hilarious life.

Francisco will bring his repertoire of voices—no doubt including "The Voiceover Dude"—back to the Tempe Improv Jan. 22-24. Go to tempeimprov.com or call 480-921-9877 for times, tickets and details.

MCC boasts 2 in prestigious Carson school

The current prides of the Mesa Community College Theatre Department are Janae Dunn and Marissa Salazar, who have been accepted to the Johnny Carson School. This particular academic institution is not, as it turns out, where students learn to pantomime golf swings or deliver one-liners in a turban. It is, rather, The Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film, a prestigious department of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, named for one of that university's more famous alumni.

Dunn and Salazar were two of eight students at MCC who auditioned for Harris Smith, director of the Carson School's Professional Actor Training Program.

"They only take about 14 students a year," notes Kevin Dressler of MCC's Theatre Department, proudly. For two of them to come from MCC, therefore, is an example of the department's growing success.

"Both of them come from totally different stories," says Dressler of Dunn and Salazar. "Marissa came from Tempe High School, where her drama teacher was Dan Miller. She came with a love of theater, but she was planning on being a nutrition major. But she changed to theater."

Dressler admires Salazar's curiosity. "A lot of people in the classroom just want the 'A,'" he says. "Marissa wants the knowledge. She's constantly borrowing books off my desk." As for Dunn. "She came to us last year from Mesquite High School," Dressler recalls. "She was going

to be with us for just a semester or two, and then she was going to go to L.A.; she had a couple of friends there. But she liked the training, and I think maybe she realized how much she didn't know."

Dunn echoes this. Unlike Salazar, Dressler's ambition was always to be a performer—she played Cinderella in 7th grade. Then, "My high school teacher Blair Biederman really took me under her wing and helped me believe in myself. She was not only a teacher but a mentor."

Similarly, of the staff at MCC, Dunn says "They've been incredible teachers and mentors."

Salazar and Dunn are only two of a number of feathers in the cap of MCC theater recently. The department, which boasts a full-time faculty of three and, according to Dressler, "50 majors, on a good day," has also had striking success with its ongoing participation in Kennedy Center

American College Theater Festival.

MCC competes in the Region 8 of the festival, against colleges from Arizona, California, Nevada, Hawaii, Utah and southwestern Colorado, going head-to-head with schools like Stanford.

"You compete in all categories...dramaturgy, theater criticism, design, acting," says Dressler. "We've had a national winner in Sound Design, Jessica Thompson, and a national finalist in costuming, Lindsay Halfhill, both for *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*...We've also had a national finalist in classical acting, Nathaniel Lewis."

Considering all this, MCC may soon have a reputation right up there with the Carson School. Who knows, maybe one day students in Nebraska will be auditioning to come to Mesa.


— M.V. Moorhead

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Amy has appeared on Comedy Central and on the National Lampoon network. She has also written for Bonnie Hunt, Jack Black, and Morgan Freeman among others.

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