

ENTERTAINMENT

'Cowboy' a tribute to moods of Old West

By Frale de Guzman
Emerald Reporter

Eugenians will receive a taste of the rough and tumble life of the Old West when the Montana Repertory Theatre presents the high-spirited musical "Cowboy" Friday night at the Hult Center.

Set in the late 1800s, "Cowboy" is a musical about the life of western artist Charles M. Russell. However, amid the show's hoopla, excitement and tributes to cowboys, horses and

rough comradery on the open range, "Cowboy" also is a tribute to the sounds and spirit of the vanishing West.

"Montana in the last years of the 19th century was a place of rapid change," said director Robert Bridges. "The open range — the West of the rugged individualist — was vanishing and being replaced by fences, towns and homesteaders."

But in his paintings and illustrations, Charles Russell managed to preserve the fading spirit of the West. Born on March 19, 1864, Russell re-

mained a cowboy at heart, even after giving up the life of a cowboy and moving to Great Falls, Mont. to live as an artist.

Through his works, Russell recaptured the moods, dreams and realities of the American West in addition to its sadness, violence and humor.

"The real power of Russell's work resides in the fact that he felt to the very depths of his being that the era was dying and that it meant something and should be recorded," a short biography on Russell stated. "He had been part of that era

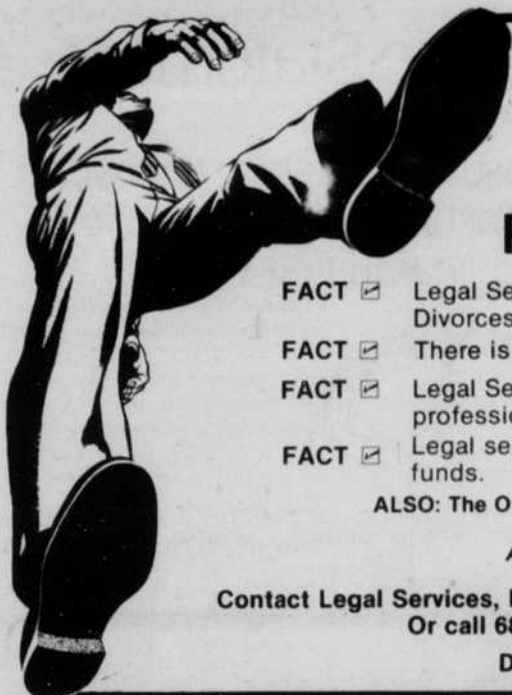
when white men first began coming to Montana. This realism and depth of feeling helped to chronicle one of America's most exciting times," the biography said.

"Russell's works have a warm feeling of storytelling around the campfire," said Patricia Cusick, a Hult Center spokeswoman. "His range of moods reached from impressionistic works like his epic 'Lewis and Clark Meeting the Flathead Indians at Ross' Hole' to the picturesque 'Men of the Open Range' to dramatic

sculptures and humorously illustrated letters and cards."

Like the West that was an integral part of Russell, "Cowboy" attempts to recapture this old-world excitement. "Cowboy" drew out the themes of the West that have become myth: freedom in wide open spaces; comradeship in labor; virtue in hard work and beauty in unspoiled nature," claimed John McCarthy in a review published in the

Turn to Cowboy, Page 8



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