Left: Derrick Crawford, left, plays York, the servant of William Clark, portrayed by Andrew Brooks, right. The play is narrated by the character of York who traveled with Lewis and Clark and was included in many of the decisions concerning the outcome of their expedition. Right: a river winding past a cliff under Midwest clouds is one of many photos by the Rev. Don Doll, S.J., that will be used as background scenery for “Lewis and Clark” that opens next Thursday.

Explorers land on Lied stage

By AMANDA SHAW
The Scene Editor

A musical 10 years in the making is finally having its world premiere performance this weekend at the Lied Education Center for the Arts.

The musical is the brainchild of Alan Klem, assistant professor of theater. “Lewis and Clark Part One: Manifest Destiny” is his first play.

The entire play is written from the perspective of York, William Clark’s personal servant.

“He could read and write, and he could shoot a gun,” Klem said about his fascination with York. “And this is in a day and age when it was against the law for black people to do any of that.”

Once the play was written, Klem found other collaborators to turn the play into the musical.

Frederick Hanna, assistant professor and coordinator of music, wrote the music and the lyrics. He composed and arranged 14 original songs for the musical, which will be played by a full-piece orchestra at the show.

Hanna said that he tried to give the music an All-American feel with a majestic, big sound.

Klem knew that in addition to having huge sound, he also needed a huge set. Klem turned to the Rev. Don Doll, S.J., because of his world-renowned photography skills.

Doll photographed scenes from Lewis and Clark’s route across the American West, from its beginnings in St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean in Oregon.

His photographs will be projected onto an 18-by-35 foot screen to create the backdrop and scenery.

“This is a purely enjoyable project for me to go out, explore and have fun making pictures,” Doll said. “It’s the grandeur of God’s creation.”

A climactic moment of the musical occurs when the expedition finally reaches the Pacific Ocean in November of 1805.

“Lewis and Clark allowed each member of the expedition to vote on where to spend the winter, including York and Sacagawea,” Klem said. “It was the first time in recorded American history that a black man and an Indian got to vote.”

The musical, “Lewis and Clark Part One: Manifest Destiny,” debuts Thursday at 7:30 p.m., and runs through Nov. 23.

For reservations, call 280-1148 for more information.