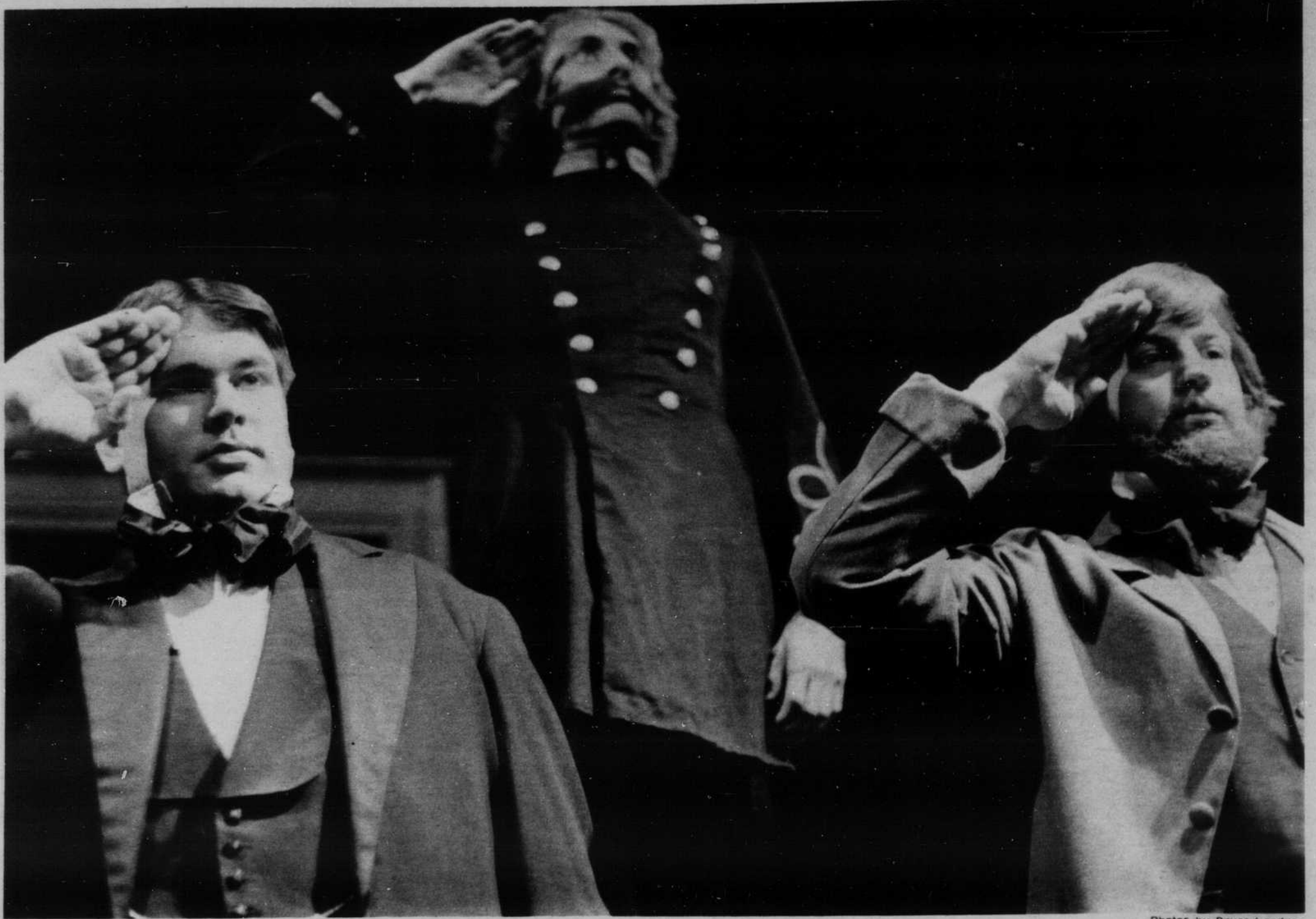




Photos by Bruce Landrey

## A Victorian operetta with a porno flic title

First of all, it should be kept in mind that the play's title contains no double entendre. No need to smirk or snicker, "Cox and Box" is merely an operetta, a 45 minute farce according to director Nancy Hills.

"It's a one act production," explains Hills. "It takes place in London in 1870 and deals with a Mr. Box and a Mr. Cox who share the same apartment."

"That's all there is to it, an operetta of the hassles these two have. I'm sure there was nothing intended by the title. Victorian England was very uptight about things like that."

"But everyone has the same reaction when they hear the title 'Cox and Box'. When I told my mother what I was doing she thought I was directing a porno flic."

John Morton probably would have blushed if he knew his 1846 work would provide such a connotation. When it was first produced it was a three-act play. Eighteen years later music was added and 'Cox and Box' also became a one act operetta.

In its shortened form, the work has only three characters: Mr. John Cox, played by Gary Schuz; Mr. James Box, played by Quade Winter; and the landlord, Sgt. Bouncer, played by Derek Winterbottom. Music is provided by Catherine Aitken on piano.

The plot deals with the plight of Cox and Box. One works at night and the other during the day. But Bouncer has rented the apartment—unbeknownst to Cox and Box—to both of them.

Of course, the two come upon each other one day and discover they have something in common. Both know the same girl, a well-to-do society type, Penelope Ann Wiggins. It seems Box was engaged to her and Cox is presently. From there the problems

and resultant chortles evolve.

Hills, a senior in theater, is directing the operetta as a requirement for a play direction class. She chose "Cox and Box" because she was in the three-act version last year and was familiar with it.

"I saw the musical and thought it was interesting. It's something that doesn't have any thought-provoking message or social significance. It's just fun."

This is the first time, thinks Hills, that the operetta has been done at the University. But for a "first run" it's working on a limited budget.

In fact, says Hills, there is no budget at all. "The theater department doesn't have any money for student projects so I have to foot the bills. I'm paying for the posters and programs, the cleaning of the costumes and the tuning of the piano. I'm lucky, though, in the respect that I can use costumes and sets that are already here and that Sheldon High is letting me use their piano."

In rehearsal since early November, the operetta has had relatively few difficulties. The only hang-up, according to Hills, was finding someone with both acting and singing ability to play Mr. Cox, who sings a majority of the nine songs in the operetta.

Hills, while enthusiastic, isn't positive about audience reaction. "I'm not sure how people are going to take it. It might be interesting if they see "Cox and Box," since it starts at 7 and only lasts 45 minutes, and then see a heavy play like "Endgame" at 8."

"And be sure and get that in the paper will you—that it starts at 7 p.m. Friday in the Pocket Playhouse."

It also plays Saturday, same time and place. There's no admission charge.

Jim Hunter

Mr. Box, Sgt. Bouncer and Mr. Cox as they will appear in the Pocket Playhouse this weekend.

