



# PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOTS

## What You Need to Know

Your headshot, along with your resume, is your calling card – if you submit a bad photo, you won't get in the door. If you can't get in the door, no audition. No audition = no job. It seems simple really, and it should be. So don't make it complicated – just make it professional.

**COLOR OR BLACK & WHITE?** Now that most photography is digital, color shots have become the norm, both because many submissions are done online and because hardcopy reproductions costs have come down significantly. (**NOTE:** For your StrawHat OnLine profile, your photo will appear in color, but is converted to black and white for our audition directory.)

### WHAT MAKES A GOOD HEADSHOT?

- **THE IMAGE LOOKS LIKE YOU AT YOUR BEST.** Women should not be excessively “glammed up,” but should have their hair neatly styled and be made up just enough to look natural (evening out skin tone, concealing blemishes, etc.). Most reputable headshot photographers can recommend a make-up artist to attend the shoot. It costs a bit extra, but it's worth it. Men may not need a make-up artist, but you should be prepared to use a little powder so you aren't too “shiny.”
- **A QUALITY HEADSHOT IS NOT A MUGSHOT.** Nor is it a fashion spread. Or a yearbook picture.
- **IT MAKES A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION:** the photo should attract us, *invite* us to turn it over to see your resume. “Ah! Who is *THIS?*” we wonder – the photo makes us want to know more about you.
- **THE PHOTO IS IN FOCUS.** Professional photographers work with high-end equipment designed to capture images at high resolution for crisp, clear 8x10 enlargements. You cannot achieve proper results with your roommate's pocket-size point 'n' shoot.
- **PROPER EXPOSURE AND LIGHTING:** Your entire face should be evenly lit, no heavy shadows. Reproductions should not be so over-exposed that your nose or forehead look bleached or burned out. All your facial features should be clear.
- **The BACKGROUND** in your shot should provide some sort of contrast with your hair/head.
- **A HEADSHOT SHOULD INCLUDE YOUR ENTIRE HEAD,** not just an extreme close up of your face.

**CHOOSING A PHOTOGRAPHER:** There are countless headshot photographers in NYC, Chicago, LA, while small metro areas and towns may not provide as many options. Visit talent agency and headshot photographers' websites – find shots you like, learn what works, then communicate with the pro you've selected.

- **COSTS:** Rates for services can vary widely, from as little as \$99 to as much as \$1500 just for the session – and then there's retouching and reproduction. Shop around, ask questions, get recommendations, and meet with a few pros to see if your personalities “click” – you won't have a productive session if you are uncomfortable with the person behind the camera!
- **THE SESSION:** Your photographer will talk you through how many outfits to bring for different looks, unless you have specified that you are trying to capture a specific market. There are fine points of mood, dress, and lighting that delineate a Theatrical shot from a TV/Film or Commercial shot. Your photographer should guide you.
- **YOUR GOAL:** certainly for StrawHat (and generally for musical theatre) you are aiming for a smiling, cheerful, “*I LOVE life!*” picture that is genuinely you, and maybe a serious shot for dramatic gigs.

**CHOOSING THE PHOTO:** Most photographers will offer their opinions on the shots they think are “keepers.” You’ll be given either a CD of the session to make selections from, or the session may be posted to a reproduction company website. You and your advisers (agents, parents, trusted friends) can access the files to browse and choose. Then you can order proofs to see them in hardcopy. Remember that the more proofs you order, the more your costs go up!

- **REPRODUCTIONS:** Find a business that specializes in retouching, formatting, and reproducing headshots. Two well-known NYC houses are Reproductions, Inc. and ModernAge.
  - Make an appointment to sit down with a retouching artist: they can brighten the whites of your eyes, erase fly-away hairs, etc.
  - Format the image: choose from various borders to frame the image, or for the photo to fill the whole 8x10 page; select the font style and placement of your name on the photo, etc.
  - Orientation: Landscape or Portrait? Both are in regular use now, but for StrawHat purposes, we prefer portrait orientation. (**NOTE:** If you submit a landscape oriented headshot, we reserve the right to edit your photo to fit the portrait field on your profile page.)
  - Once you’ve made these decisions, most reproduction houses can digitally store your photos indefinitely, so you can order reprints with ease and need never run out of headshots again.

If you’re waiting for new shots to arrive, go ahead and submit your application to us with the photo you currently have. Follow our instructions in the FAQs about how to go about replacing your headshot with your new one.