

Mary Hall  
Miller Arts Scholars Minigrant Proposal  
Fall 2023

## The Auditioner's Toolkit

### **Project Summary**

As I begin to prepare for my career as an actor, at UVa and beyond, I've found that my tools to prepare for and record auditions have simply been lacking as compared to my peers. While I've been able to make due with what I have so far, I'd like to put my best foot forward when it comes to future auditions by updating my repertoire with new tools that will aid in my professional development and overall preparedness.

The first essential tool that I believe is necessary for improving my audition toolkit is updated, professional headshots. It wasn't until I got to the university that I realized the severe need for high-quality headshots. Previously, the only acting opportunities I was able to receive were through my high school and a few community performances in which headshots were taken there. However, we weren't given access to them after the performance, and the highest quality one that I had was when I was 17. Therefore my most up-to-date acting headshot was taken in my parent's backyard on my phone due to the need for a headshot as a prop in Spectrum Theatre's production of *A Chorus Line* in Fall of 2022. While the photos came out fine, and I was able to use it for other auditions, it ultimately made me feel unprofessional and unprepared for a career in the arts.

The primary reason for avoiding getting the headshots professionally taken was due to the cost barrier, given that many high-quality headshots can cost upwards of \$700-\$1000. However, in doing my research for headshot photography and reaching out to other actors, I was able to find Amanda Miles Photography by recommendation of Maria Carpinelli, a Musical Theatre major at James Madison University. With her cost effective packages, I'm able to travel down to the Richmond/Goochland area and get up to 10 digital headshots for only \$250, with the option to purchase additional images for \$15 each. I opted for this package for the variety of pictures that I'll be able to choose from through the multiple outfits so that I can better suit individual headshots to the projects that I am submitting them to. This combined with the low-cost and high-quality of the photos will best help me begin to market myself and exude professionalism as an actor.

Additionally, with the increase in demand for self-tapes post COVID-19 outbreak, I am in need of updating my filming setup. While I'm lucky enough to be able to use my iPhone to record the videos, it's becoming increasingly difficult to have a proper recording setup as I navigate shared living spaces and moving around each school year. Usually, I use whatever white sheet of fabric I can find around my living space, my phone propped on my laptop on a table, and whatever light I may be able to find. By purchasing tools such as a ring light and a portable backdrop (in addition to a stand for that backdrop), I'll be able to set up a recording space for self tapes both in my home and on the go. The ring light kit that I found comes with a stand and a smartphone

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mount, so that it is able to act as a light and a tripod for any self-tapes I may need to record. Furthermore, the backdrop that I found is reversible, so I am able to better suit the self-tapes toward the mood needed for the particular reading or monologue that I am recording. Unfortunately, this particular backdrop does not come with a stand, but I found that among the many options available that it was more cost effective to buy the backdrop and stand separately.

Finally, with the remaining money allotted, I would like to purchase a hard drive dedicated to my acting and drama projects. This hard drive, recommended by Professor Mona Kasra and former Miller Arts Scholar Sarah Regan Borucke, would act as a home base for my reels, self-tapes, plays, and any other projects necessary to further my career as an artist. With 2TB of storage, I can expect this hard drive to last me several years, and hopefully far beyond my time as a student here at the university.

With the assistance of a Miller Arts Scholars minigrant, I'll be able to increase my professionalism and therefore broaden my opportunities as an actor and artist. I am beyond grateful for this potential opportunity, and thank you so much for your consideration!

**Budget:**

<u>Expense</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Professional Actors Headshot with Amanda Miles Photography	35 minute session with two outfit changes and 10 digital images	\$250
Sunpak - LED 448 19" Bi-Color Ring Light Kit - Black	19 inch bicolor LED ring light, ball head, adjustable light stand, and smartphone mount	\$89.99
Reversible Collapsible Backdrop	Gray and blue reversible backdrop for video (self-tape) production	\$62.99
Portable Backdrop Stand	Stand to hold backdrops for self-tapes	\$45.99
Seagate 2TB External USB 3.0 Portable Hard Drive	Storage for video footage (i.e. reels, self-tapes, films, etc.) and other drama projects (such as plays)	\$70.99

Total: \$519.96\*

\*Note: The additional \$19.96 will be covered out of pocket by me.

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**Timeline:**

- Mid October
  - Schedule headshot appointment with Amanda and place \$50 deposit
- Early November
  - Purchase ring light, backdrop, backdrop stand, and hard drive
  - Upload any acting projects (i.e. reels, self-tapes, plays, etc.) to the hard drive
- Mid-to-Late November
  - Travel to Richmond for my headshot session with Amanda (either during a weekend or Thanksgiving break)
  - Start to record self-tape auditions for productions in Richmond & Charlottesville
- Early December
  - Submit headshots to casting calls in Richmond, Charlottesville, DC, and surrounding areas