

MASTERING YOUR ACTING CAREER:



HOW TO BOOK YOUR FIRST BIG ROLE.

GORN  PHOTO

THE POWER BEHIND THE IMAGE

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Lev Gorn is an actor, headshot photographer, artist, writer and filmmaker. Lev's career in film and television covers over 50 films and TV series. He has shared the screen with Susan Sarandon, Damien Lewis, Matthew Rhys, Emma Stone, Jonah Hill, and has been directed by Woody Allen, Robert Deniro, Cary Fukunaga, along with other incredible directors.



Lev has played standout roles in some of the most highly-acclaimed television series, including a series regular on the Emmy-award winning FX's "The Americans", recurring on HBO's "The Wire" - which was named "the greatest series of all-time" by Entertainment Weekly and Rolling Stone magazines, working in numerous episodes with Emma Stone and Jonah Hill on NetFlix's "Maniac", spending a month in Russia shooting "Jack Ryan" starring Wendell Pierce and John Krasinski, and running through the jungles in Puerto Rico filming "The Enemy Within" with Jennifer Carpenter.



Lev can currently be seen recurring opposite Joel Kinneman on Apple TV's "For All Mankind", and his latest film "Lingua Franca" is available to stream on Netflix.

As a screenwriter and film director, he has written and directed two award winning short films, Joe Mover and Ten: Thirty-One, and is currently getting a feature film off the ground, which he will direct this year.

[Joe Mover: https://vimeo.com/87265093](https://vimeo.com/87265093)

[Ten: Thirty-One: https://vimeo.com/85435184](https://vimeo.com/85435184)

Over the past 20 years, Lev has redefined the art of headshot photography. His extensive experience in the entertainment industry, in front and behind the camera, has enabled him to develop a uniquely personal and innovative approach. He directs you during the shoot as if you were on a movie set. He listens to your ideas and coaches you in order to capture them in your headshots.

Lev has an unmistakable eye for fashion, color, makeup and hair that create game-changing headshots with that irresistible NYC edge. He styles your shoot all the way down to the jewelry, and captures your essence which tells casting directors exactly who you are and what roles you can play.

Lev's first hand knowledge of the way casting directors cast projects helps him choose the right locations and create lighting that captures your versatility so you can book auditions.



HOW TO BOOK YOUR FIRST BIG ROLE

If you are reading this PDF you've been wondering what specific steps you need to take to become a working actor. You are interested in reaching your goals without wasting years on trial and error. You want to book your first big role and quit your survival job.

Mastering Your Acting Career Workshop will give you the tools I have been using for the past 20 years to consistently book acting work in film and television. This workshop will

take the mystery out of getting your first big role and prepare you to launch your acting career.

The tools you will learn will show you:

- How to get signed with an Agent and Manager
- How to get noticed by Casting Directors and get auditions
- How to meet upcoming film directors
- How to stand out from other actors in your type
- How to do a killer self-tapes that get callbacks
- Using an innovative audition technique to book lead roles
- How to work with directors on professional TV/Film sets
- Choosing a survival job that fuels and supports your creative path
- Selecting the right scene study class for your unique type
- Health and Wellness practices that support your acting career and help you stand out
- Booking game-changing headshots that get 30% more auditions
- Choosing a survival job that fuels your creative path
- Essential on-camera makeup and hair looks for auditions
- On-camera audition wardrobe that conveys character without looking like a costume

In our business, no matter how hard we work, we ultimately have little control over being cast in the role for which we are auditioning. If the rules of the game were that the best actor gets the role then I would have nothing further to say. However, there are numerous factors that are beyond our control that go into the casting process:

- Eye color
- Weight
- Height
- Hair
- Race
- Voice
- Personality
- You may look too much like the lead
- You may not have chemistry with an actor that has already been cast
- The director's unique vision of the role
- You could remind the producer/director of someone they don't like
- The Network's or Producer's final decision

There are so many elements that are not in our creative control, yet we have to show up for our auditions with the same passion, energy and professionalism as if it was our very first audition. We cannot get jaded and fall into a victim mentality. We need a plan with a series of measurable tasks that we can accomplish on a daily basis.

Your own dynamic practice that empowers you as an artist and human being and with each accomplished step brings you closer to your goals; a daily practice with a series of concrete tools that will show you how to become a full time working actor.

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WHAT IS TALENT?

Some people are born with a natural sensitivity for acting work that doesn't come as naturally to others. However, talent is not a learnable skill. You either have it or you don't. But it isn't your talent that gets you the job. It's the work you put into your preparation that gets you the acting job. Talent may help an actor stand out, but relying on your talent without doing the work will never result in an acting career.

It's your work that gets you noticed, and once you are noticed everyone says you are talented.

For example, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is arguably one of the greatest musicians of all time. Mozart's father chained 4 year old Mozart to the piano. Yes, with actual chains. And young Mozart had to play 5 hours a day, 6 days a week, and in church on Sundays. Talent was definitely helpful, but it was the hours of work that revealed his talent. Not the other way around.

Be honest with yourself. How many hours did you allocate today to work on your acting career? 4 hours? 3 hours? 2 hours? One? I'm not talking about reading plays and watching tv/movies or going to the theater. I'm talking about scene study, vocal production, speech, movement, contacting agents, researching casting directors, working on monologues, writing, etc. You have to work on your acting career every day, but you need a plan and in the following pages I will show you how to achieve the seemingly impossible task of launching your acting career.

What is going to set you apart from every other actor out there trying to get a role doing the same thing as you? Let's think outside the box. You can't do the same thing and expect different results. What can you do differently to unleash your maximum potential

and become the actor you are meant to be? Do you want to be extraordinary? Let's prepare to do extraordinary things!

Personal Story:

I was in my first year of acting school and was assigned a scene in which my wife was leaving me because I was a bus driver and was not making enough money to satisfy her lifestyle. It was an intense scene in which I had to really face my demons and go to a very dark place. However, I didn't like my scene partner and wasn't able to be emotionally affected by the scene, and stopped putting in the work. So, after class, my amazing teacher Suzanne took me aside and told me that I'm half-assing the scene. I told her that I didn't like my partner, but Suzanne said it was my job to fall in love with my partner because the character is in love with his wife. I said, how? That's when Suzanne hit me with... "I can't help you there, Lev. That's talent. You either have it or you don't."

I was in a panic. What if I had no talent?! So, I started working my ass off on the scene and meeting with my scene partner daily. Two weeks later, we did the scene in class. At the end of the scene, as my wife walked out of the door, I broke down crying. Real tears flowed from my eyes. I was not acting. It was an exhilarating out of body experience. It was thrilling. I felt like a real actor. After class, I asked Suzanne if my scene work that day meant that I was talented after all... She smiled and said, I don't know much about talent, but you sure as hell worked your ass off on this scene!

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STEP 1: YOUR ACTING CLASS

Your acting career begins in Acting Class, not at an industry party.

The process of working on scenes in class and meeting with your scene partner between classes to rehearse the scenes, sets the tone for the way you will approach auditions and ultimately work on the roles you book. If you work your ass off in class and take risks it'll make all the difference in the process of booking that game-changing role. Continue this practice after you graduate. It's important that you find a good scene study class with an acting teacher who inspires you and pushes you to the next level.

How do you know that you're being pushed to the next level?

The work should feel hard and challenging. You're stepping out of your comfort zone. You are learning new things in every class and rehearsal. You sometimes hit a wall. You doubt

yourself. You find new original ways to access your emotional life. You dream, breathe, eat, smell, hear, taste your art. You are becoming an artist.

Do not opt out of working on scenes that trigger intense emotions in you. Your job as an actor is to go to the darkest and brightest of places so you can make your audience feel what you feel. Be funny, be sad, be wild, be crazy, cry, laugh, do whatever it takes, but whatever you do, make it real and true for your audience. This is your responsibility as an artist.

And If you consistently challenge yourself, you will experience breakthroughs and “aha” moments. And you will become a better actor. Which will give you the freedom to take creative risks in your work. Those risks will set you apart from other actors because they are simply not putting in the time. Hard work pays off. You will work.

For example, Arnold Schwarzenegger, won the Mister Olympia competition 6 consecutive times 1970-1975. He was born with great natural proportions, but when he got serious about becoming a professional bodybuilder, he moved to the United States and began to follow a program which had him working out twice a day, six days a week, all while holding down a day job in construction. Do you think after he won his first Mister Olympia he looked in the mirror and said to himself “Okay, Arnie, you’re a champion, you can take it easy now”? Arnold Schwarzenegger understood that his natural talent set him apart, but it was the hard work that got him the first win.

Grad School MFA Program?

Grad school is an immersive experience. You will work on classical material, which is very difficult to do in NYC unless you are already classically trained. And you don’t have to think about anything other than your acting work. You will also acquire the experience of being on stage in numerous plays. And after you graduate, you will walk away with an MFA degree which will allow you to teach. Which can be a deeply fulfilling direction for an artist, as well as a practical backup plan if your acting career doesn’t take off. Going to grad school is an individual choice. Many working actors have an MFA, but just as many do not. Make this choice based on what you want and what is right for YOU.

STEP 2: HOW TO GET NOTICED BY CASTING DIRECTORS

Research television shows for which you're the right type, theater companies that produce plays which resonate with you, and independent films that speak to your soul. Now, make an Excel Spreadsheet of Casting Directors who cast those tv shows, films, and plays...

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STEP 3: MEETING UPCOMING INDEPENDENT FILM DIRECTORS

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STEP 4: ASSISTING WORKING ACTORS

Connect with full time working actors like me through social media and offer to run lines with them. You will learn a ton. Every working actor has their own process of getting ready for auditions and booked work. This is one of the most overlooked tools you have in your disposal. If you help professional actors run lines you will witness their approach firsthand. You will be there helping the actor get ready and watch as they make new discoveries and make acting choices in real time. You will learn technical aspects of actor training that you can apply in your own preparation.

Very early in my career I met the great character actor Paul Ben Victor and offered to help him run lines. Throughout the process of watching Paul work and helping him run lines, I acquired powerful tools from Paul which eventually helped me book my own roles. My connection with Paul turned into a lifelong friendship. He has become one of my closest friends.

STEP 5: TYPECASTING AND OWNING YOUR TYPE

Typecasting: being repeatedly cast in the same type of role, as a result of the appropriateness of your appearance or previous success in such a role.

Having a clear understanding of your type will show casting directors that you are a serious actor who is interested in having a career, not just hoping to grab a random acting job.

Building your career builds your reputation.

Personal Story:

When I was cast as a series regular on The Americans to play Arkady Ivanovich, a 50 year old Russian KGB agent in the 1980's, I was 20 lbs heavier and naturally crooked teeth. On the screen, I wore a suit and tie and was clean shaven. This physical appearance was perfect for the TYPE of role I was playing. I did good work on The Americans and as a result I was offered many other Russian and Eastern European roles on numerous television shows. I was very happy to accept these roles and continue working.

However, at a certain point in my career after playing so many Russian/Eastern European roles I had a burning desire to play other characters. I wanted to play regular guys like me. I wanted to play lawyers, husbands, fathers, doctors, construction workers, police officers, etc. But no matter how many excellent auditions I delivered, I couldn't book them. I understood that I needed to make a change, but I didn't know what it was. Everyone saw me as a Russian actor. Then, one day it hit me! My physical appearance is ultimately my type. I needed to change the way I look. What did I do?

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STEP 6: HOW TO GET SIGNED WITH AN AGENT AND MANAGER

Getting an agent and manager is the result of your continued cumulative efforts. It's never just one job or one performance that will get you signed with a representative. There are exceptions of course, but hoping that you'll get signed by being seen in a single performance puts you in a desperate state of mind.

The strength of this Workshop is to give you a set of tools that give you the confidence and know-how to confidently build your acting career by creating a plan you can follow on a daily basis. By accomplishing your daily tasks, you empower yourself and build confidence. Agents and managers love confident actors. Confidence books roles.

Here are 7 steps that will get you signed with an agent or manager...

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STEP 7: WORKING WITH DIRECTORS ON A PROFESSIONAL FILM/TV SET

Many directors weren't actors or acting teachers before they started directing. They may have been editors or writers or directors of photography or 1st AD's. These are all technical positions that do not require the specific knowledge of acting technique. Their directing style most likely will not resemble your acting teacher's. You will often get result-based directions like these: "Be more upset", "Speak and/or walk faster", "Be angrier", "Fold your arms on this word", "Sit down on this line", "Speak from your gut", "Let's try it again with less emotion." You may get an exact line reading or you'll be asked to put less emphasis on a particular word.

It doesn't matter what direction you're given, it is your job to figure out what is required of you and deliver an original, professional performance...

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STEP 8: GAME-CHANGING AUDITION TECHNIQUE

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STEP 9: CHARACTER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Research on a character DOES NOT start by watching an actor playing a role in a film or tv show. If you are tasked to play a lawyer, you must go and speak to professional lawyers. Watch documentaries and YouTube videos of actual lawyers in court.

Use real people in your research. If you play a doctor or a corrections officer or a CEO, pick up the phone or reach out through social media and tell them you're an actor

researching a role. They'll be happy to speak with you or even to meet with you in person. Throughout my career, I have discovered that people love to help actors.

[*DOWNLOAD THE BOOK AND LEARN HOW CREATE UNFORGETTABLE CHARACTERS!*](#)

STEP 10: INSIDER HEADSHOT MAKE-UP TIPS FOR MEN AND WOMEN

You want to look your best on the day of your shoot. But for those of us who aren't professional make-up artists, prepping our faces for a photoshoot can be a real challenge. Should I put on heavy makeup or come fresh-faced and hope Lev's lighting works miracles? Of course, if you want the best results I recommend working with my professional makeup artist **James Milligan**. But if you're on a budget, here are the essential insider tips for headshot make-up you can do yourself.

ONE WEEK BEFORE YOUR SHOOT

Start filling up on **alkaline water**. Skin looks fuller and fresher when it's well hydrated. It will also help fill out those fine lines, which show up on camera. Your eyes will look livelier and brighter if you drink a liter of water daily!

Don't do anything that could irritate your skin prior to your shoot. Do not get a facial or go to a tanning bed. Stick to a healthy diet and your normal **moisturizer** to avoid unwanted irritation. Use a **toner** the morning of the photo shoot to close your pores. Makeup application works better on cleansed and toned skin.

DAY OF THE SHOOT: HOW TO DO YOUR EYES, LIPS & SKIN...

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STEP 11: YOUR REEL

A demo reel is always part of an audition submission, so be sure to remove clips where the quality isn't 100% professional; bad lighting, unclear sound, and choppy camera work will distract casting directors from watching your performance and they will move on to another submission.

It's better to send one good scene or no reel at all, than to send a full reel of clips that make your work look subpar and unprofessional.

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STEP 12: SELF-TAPE SET UP

The need for pilots for all kinds of shows has never been greater. All the major TV networks and streaming services are competing for viewers and therefore they continue to turn out new content. Your opportunities to book a TV show are multiplying every month. Be ready when your chance comes. Do you want to spend \$50/hour for self-tapes? If you're not prepared to make your own self-tape the same or next day you book an audition, fix that now. This will serve you well throughout your acting career. What do you need?

[LEARN HOW TO SELF-TAPE PROFESSIONALLY AT HOME AND SAVE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS!](#)

STEP 13: WARDROBE FOR AUDITIONS

When you are making wardrobe selections for a self-tape or auditions, you must keep in mind that your selections have to suggest the character. You are not yet playing the actual character for which you are auditioning. What you wear for your audition or self-tape cannot look like a "character costume"...

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STEP 14: CHOOSING A SURVIVAL JOB THAT SUPPORTS YOUR CAREER

Find a job that you like or don't hate. You don't have to love it. We spend half of our lives at work. If you hate your job, it spills into every area of your life. You don't want to approach your audition as an opportunity to escape your life. This creates anxiety and a sense of desperation. And anxiety and desperation take you out of the moment making you unable to connect to the material nor to your reader. Casting directors remember a good audition for one week. A bad audition stays in their minds for 6 months.

The outcome of your auditions is directly related to your everyday life.

STEP 15: HEALTH AND WELLNESS THAT SUPPORTS YOUR ACTING CAREER

As artists, it is our job to maintain a healthy relationship with ourselves and the people around us. We must make daily choices that consciously and specifically care for our mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health: powerful choices that result in positive emotions, reduced anxiety, self-confidence and strong self-esteem. You are what you think and feel. Casting directors see, hear and feel you. Your lifestyle creates your type. When you change your thoughts, you change yourself.

What are these powerful choices?

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STEP 16: HEADSHOTS THAT GET 30% MORE AUDITIONS

Your headshot gets the audition. Your talent books the role.

You may be the most talented actor in the world, but all a casting director knows about you is what engages them in your headshot. If that headshot doesn't stop them in their tracks, your dream goes nowhere. Every opportunity to emerge from the crowd to audition for a career changing role goes through the same process.

Getting that audition slot depends exclusively on your headshot. Your talent and hard work will only be seen if you get to audition for that role that will launch your career. Your ability to get the audition will determine the future of your acting career. Nothing is more important for your career than your headshot.

Unlike most headshot photographers, I live in the entertainment industry on both sides of the camera. I see in real time what wardrobe colors and styles will make or break your

headshot; locations that grab the casting director's attention and those that don't; hair and makeup trends that enhance your castability in a headshot; and of course the importance of studio vs. natural lighting.

This has allowed me to redefine the art of headshot photography and develop a personal and innovative approach to taking headshots that deliver 30% more auditions.

The story of how I became one of the top headshot photographers is truly incredible. As a young actor in NYC in my 20's, I had my headshots taken by 9 different headshot photographers. I did look nice in the shots, but they were completely ineffective in getting me consistent auditions. They were just that - nice pictures. Nothing more. Pretty much what most headshot photographers do - take nice pictures which your grandma puts on the wall.

However, as I continued to search for the right photographer, I had an image in my mind of what a game-changing headshot looks like... I knew that it must jump off the page and tell casting directors and producers exactly who I am and what roles I can play.

So, what did I do? I decided to take my own headshot.

I enrolled in the International Center of Photography and immersed myself in photography classes in order to develop and perfect my shooting technique and execution of the right lighting in the studio and on location, using numerous combinations of wardrobe styles and colors and makeup and hair looks - all of this to give me the technical freedom to create my own headshot that got me into the audition room so I could get my first acting job.

After a year of rigorous study and practice, I knew what I was doing. My headshots came out exactly the way I envisioned them; my headshots jumped off the page and said exactly who I am and what roles I can play. I started consistently getting into the audition room and booking acting work. As my acting career began to take off, friends asked me to do their headshots and all of a sudden I found myself living in two interconnected worlds - acting and headshot photography.

There are over 200 headshot photographers in New York City. Choosing one is like playing the lottery. Most photographers can take a nice picture of you. But a nice picture does not grab the casting director's attention. A nice picture goes into the wastebasket. What is the recipe that creates a headshot that brings you inside the audition room? What sort of headshot makes a casting director want to meet the person in the photo?

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YOUR HEADSHOT MUST HAVE THESE 3 ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS:

1. **Your dynamic range:** This determines the roles you have the emotional range to play right now and in the near future. My experience as a working actor and film director gives me the technical knowledge to capture this most important element of “who you are and what roles you can play”.
2. **Your specific castability:** Capturing your ability to play the kind of roles you are physically right for, depends entirely on my unique lighting design and the locations we will choose together. We will create a clear story of who you are as an actor and artist.
3. **Your individual qualities:** The way you express yourself through your eyes, facial expressions, and physical demeanor, which is further enhanced through your connection with me during the shoot as I direct you as if you were on the set of a film or tv show.

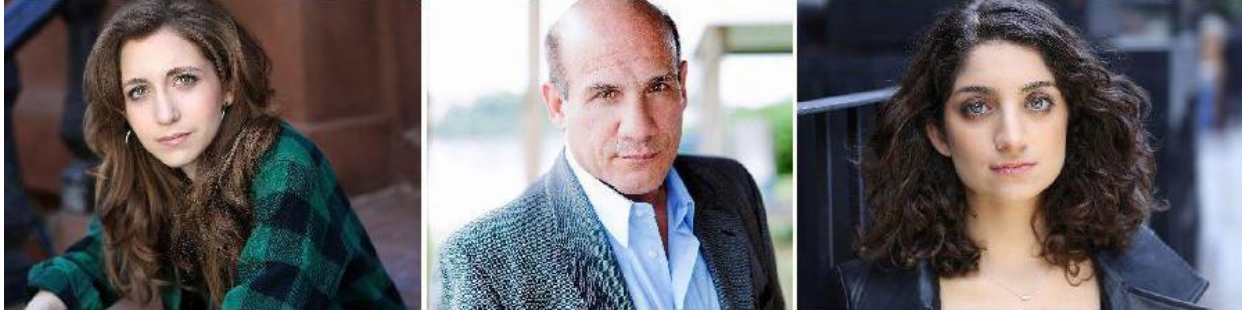
Your headshot is the only calling card you have. If it tells Casting Directors exactly who you are and what roles you can play, it will get you called into auditions, you will book acting work and launch your acting career! It's easy to blame your talent agent or manager that your headshots “aren't working” as the reason you aren't getting auditions. But if it's been a year or more since your last headshot session, it's in the best interest of your acting career - especially for Pilot Season - to update your headshots or at the very least get 2-3 new “outdoor” looks.

Shooting outdoors is a bit more improvisational than in the studio. There is a vibrant energy on the street, depth and texture in the background, that makes for a truly unique experience and one of a kind headshot that captures the casting director's imagination.



If your current headshots have been submitted over and over again, they are getting stale. A casting director will often overlook a headshot they have seen too many times, even if you auditioned for them in the past. There is an expiration date on all products and the same is true for headshots.

Casting directors are swamped with hundreds of submissions. No resume credit will open the door to an audition better than a fresh new headshot. Remember, casting directors won't look at your resume and reel unless your headshot jumps off the page, stops them in their tracks, and tells them exactly who you are and what roles you can play.



Your headshot books the audition, your talent books the job.

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