

Put Your Best Photo Forward

The old saying “A picture is worth a thousand words” is not just a cliché, it is also true.

Your publicity photo has more impact than anything else in your press release. For that reason, you should take a good, hard, unbiased look at the impression your photo makes on the first-time viewer.

You should also look through the dance magazines and your local newspaper, and pick out the pictures that make you stop, look, and linger. Ask yourself what they have in common, and use that information in helping you to compose your own photographs.

Look beyond the physical representation of you, the dancer, and assess the picture as a whole. Plan ahead and have something ready for when you need it. Don't root through your photo album at the last minute and grab something.

Having just spent hours fixing up the publicity photos sent to me for a recent event, I can tell you what makes a good photo to my eyes:

- Good, but relaxed posture/body line
- Evidence of the inner character of the dancer (elegant, athletic, introspective, exuberant, etc.)
- Excellent focus
- Natural, balanced color
- No distracting background

The first two characteristics are up to you. The third is up to the photographer. Fortunately, in today's digitized world, if you have a picture with the first three characteristics, it is possible (although time-consuming) to correct the remaining flaws by adjusting the color balance and removing the background.

The effort is worth it. If you are trying to attract the attention of the overburdened entertainment editor of the local newspaper, or make the potential seminar participant decide to attend your event instead of a competing event, the photographs in your press release or your flyer can make all the difference in the world.

Some other considerations:

- The focus of your photo is **you**

Artsy backgrounds are great for your photo album, but are terrible for publicity photos. The busier the photo, the lower the impact, unless the background is meaningful to the event.

- Still pose versus action shot

only submit the ones that translate well in situations where the photo may be printed in either format.

- Full-body versus head shot

Flyer and newspaper space is always at a premium. Your wonderful full-body photo may be cropped down to a nub, or reduced in size to where all detail is lost.

A good full-body shot may not crop well. Do your homework, and experiment with cropping your photo in various ways to see what happens. If the results are awkward or comical, be prepared with an alternative, such as a good head shot. (Think high school yearbook photo.)

- Sleaze factor

A good photo within our dance community may not be appropriate for the general public. Keep the intended audience in mind when selecting a photo for an event. A costume that dancers won't blink an eye at may be considered entirely too risqué for a newspaper in a conservative community, and may hinder instead of help your publicity efforts.

- Resolution

A photo that is adequate for a web site may not reproduce well on a publicity poster. Web site photos are usually created at a resolution of 72 pixels per square inch. Higher resolutions increase the disk storage required for the photo (and therefore the download time) without any benefit to the viewer.

Web-appropriate resolution is not high enough for print media. You need enough detail in your digital image to produce a photo-quality print. This means using the high-quality mode on your digital camera, or increasing the resolution when scanning a hard-copy photo.

First impressions are important within the dance community or with the general public. Your publicity photo should reflect that importance, and you should spend as much thought and care on your photo as you do on your dance.