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Lorenzo Music

Monday 20 August 2001 00:00 BST •  Comments

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Gerald David (Lorenzo) Music, writer, actor and musician: born New York 2 May 1937; married (two sons, two daughters); died Los Angeles 4 August 2001.

On countless occasions, the Emmy Award-winning writer and actor Lorenzo Music was asked, "Is that really the name you were born with?" "Of course not," he would invariably reply. "I was born Gerald Music." Best known as Carlton, the doorman in the popular sitcom *Rhoda*, Music claimed he became Lorenzo "for spiritual reasons".

Gerald David Music was born in Brooklyn, New York, but grew up in Duluth, Minnesota. While studying at the University of Minnesota, he met his future wife, Henrietta, and they worked up a comedy-plus-music act that lasted eight years. They also had their own syndicated television series, *The Lorenzo and Henrietta Music Show*.

Soon after his wife retired to concentrate on their growing family, Music was performing in a San Francisco club when the comedian Tommy Smothers caught his act. Impressed, Smothers hired him to join the writing staff of the CBS television variety series *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* (1967-69).

Unlike any other network television performers of the day, Tommy and Dick Smothers dared to do jokes about sex, drugs, motherhood, bigotry and President

Lyndon Johnson's mishandling of the Vietnam war. Highly popular with young viewers, the controversial series was both a hit and a headache for CBS, whose censor once sent the writers (who also included Steve Martin) the notorious memo: "It's okay to satirise the President, as long as you do so with respect." Those writers received an Emmy award during the show's second season, shortly before its abrupt cancellation by the nervous network.

Music helped to create CBS-TV's long-running *Bob Newhart Show* (1972-78), which starred the deadpan comedian as a Chicago psychologist married to an elementary-school teacher. Music and his wife also wrote the show's theme song.

He was writer and story editor of the even more successful *Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-77), which was set in his home state of Minnesota. It unveiled the witty saga of the unmarried Mary Richards, who came to Minneapolis to take a job on a television news show. Mary's best friend and neighbour was Rhoda Morgenstern (Valerie Harper), a New Yorker who worked for a local department store as a window dresser.

Music liked writing for the Morgenstern character, and he and his partner David Davis created the spin-off show *Rhoda* (1974-78), in which she returned to her native New York to live in an apartment house where the unseen doorman made slurred contributions through the intercom. The producers thought Music's lugubrious voice ideal for this role, and he played it for four years, making the fuzzy "This is Carlton, your doorman" a popular catchphrase. In 1989 he won a second Emmy when *Carlton, Your Doorman*, which he co-produced, won the Outstanding Animated Programme award.

When Music was invited to provide the voice for a celebrated comic-strip character, he admitted he "didn't know Garfield the Cat from Charlie the Tuna". A television special of 1982 marked the first occasion when his acerbic comments emerged from an animated Garfield. He continued to do his cat voice in more specials and for a Saturday-morning series that enjoyed a seven-year run. He was also the voice of a crash dummy who urged television viewers to buckle their seat belts when in the car.

Until shortly before his death, Music recorded voice-overs for television and radio. Happy to be an unseen performer, he said: "Anonymity works for me. That way I never grow old."