

## **CARMEN FINESTRA**

Carmen Finestra was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1947. His parents emigrated from Italy. His father was a bricklayer and his mother a seamstress. After high school, Carmen studied to be a priest for two years, then attended Penn State University and graduated with a B.A. in 1971.

He moved to New York and acted off-off-Broadway for three seasons with the Jean Cocteau Repertory Company where he performed in "Waiting For Godot," "Tom Thumb," and "A Midsummer's Night Dream," to name a few. It was here that a fellow actress told him about an opening as a "gofer" at the office of TV producer Joe Cates (father of Phoebe and brother of Gil, former D.G.A. President). Finestra got the job and caught Cates' eye because of funny memos he wrote. Joe Cates gave Carmen his first writing job in 1976 on a Johnny Cash summer variety show. It was here that he met a young, still relatively unknown comedian named Steve Martin. Carmen later wrote material for Steve's nightclub act, as well as television specials.

Finestra is best known as the supervising producer for five-and-a-half seasons of "The Cosby Show," and as the co-creator and Executive Producer of "Home Improvement," starring Tim Allen. He also co-created and executive produced "Thunder Alley," starring Ed Asner, and "Soul Man," starring Dan Aykroyd.

In film, Finestra executive produced "Firelight," written and directed by "Shadowlands" author Bill Nicholson; "Where The Heart Is," starring Natalie Portman and Ashley Judd; and "What Women Want," starring Mel Gibson and Helen Hunt. He has also co-written with Jack Handey the comedy "Harv The Barbarian."

During his career, Finestra has won three Writers Guild of America Awards for his work on two Steve Martin specials and for "Time Warner Presents the Earth Day Special." He was nominated for three Emmy Awards and a Humanitas Prize for "Cosby," and in 1987 shared a Peabody Award with the other "Cosby" writers for outstanding achievement in television writing. He has also been nominated for three Emmies and two Golden Globes for "Home Improvement," which he co-created with Matt Williams and David McFadzean.