

Carnegie Medal Acceptance Speech

Melissa Reilly Ellard

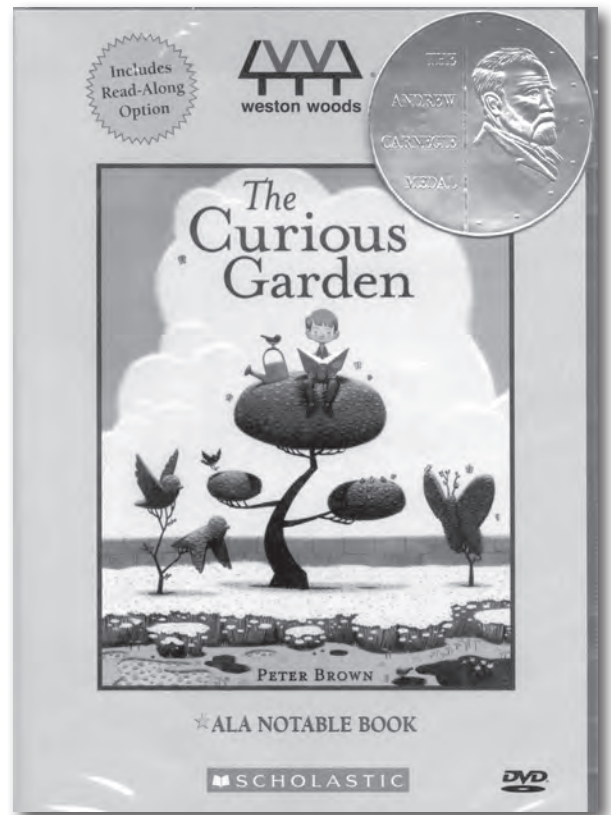


Melissa Reilly Ellard is Producer/ Acquisitions at Weston Woods Studios, which won the 2011 Andrew Carnegie Medal for *The Curious Garden*, based on the book by Peter Brown.

Thank you, Paul, and good morning everyone. I'd like to begin by thanking Peter Brown, because without his beautiful pictures and words, we would not be here with you today. When I first saw the book *The Curious Garden* I was especially struck by a double-page spread where Liam is standing in the middle of these beautiful wild flowers, and he is so close to the clouds that you think he can also touch them. This picture is a contradiction to the city life that is the setting for the book. How can something so beautiful exist in the grey and dreary city depicted in the opening page? So thank you, Peter, for bringing us Liam and proving you can make a difference.

Many of you are probably aware that the New York City High Line was the inspiration for *The Curious Garden*. So I think it is fitting that I mention the two men who were behind this project from the beginning, Joshua David and Robert Hammond. Joshua and Robert first met in 1999 at a local community meeting about the future of the line. They were the only two people at the meeting who were interested in saving it. Since its opening in 2009, 4 million visitors have walked the High Line, and just two weeks ago the second phase opened up, doubling the length of the elevated railroad-turned-city-park to a full mile. Just like Liam, the High Line has created a serene green place where people can go and connect with nature and experience something different from the concrete and asphalt jungle they see every day, again proving that we can all make a difference.

When we were discussing what we envisioned for the musical score for this story, I thought immediately of David Mansfield, one of our favorite composers. David works in Manhattan but lives in a suburb in New Jersey, so we knew he'd be able to connect with the story and underscore the differences between



the cold city life and the serene setting that Liam was creating. Thank you, David, for giving us such beautiful music to grow with.

Just like the many plants and flowers that make up Liam's beautiful garden, a Weston Woods film is created and thrives because it is tended to by so many caring people. There is a running joke in our office that Paul is the guiding light. Well, unlike the longest running soap opera, which was extinguished, our guiding light continues to shine, enabling us all to grow. Steve Syarto, our sound engineer, creates the luscious layers of our sound tracks. Steve, you're the best fertilizer around. Linda Lee, our general manager and vice president, continuously waters our projects and gets our films out there. Linda, thank you for support and patience. On a personal note, I'm indebted to my husband Bruce, who is my sunshine. Thank you, Bruce.

To Angelique Kopa and the 2011 Carnegie Committee members, thank you for bestowing this honor on Weston Woods and our film *The Curious Garden*. Your continued support inspires all of us to tend to our gardens every day. Thank you. 🌻