**Nellie Melba’s Fundraising Gift Book with Jess Harris**

**Audio Transcript**

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My name is Jessica Harris. I'm an artist, a teacher and an author,

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So, my work is really inspired by the natural world around me. So I love to collect patterns and colours that I find when I'm walking around, and then I bring these back to my own artwork to help me express internal landscape.

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No matter what you're trying to express, just the process is nice and it's different for everybody. So different people will express themselves in different ways and that's why artists are so amazing.

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I'm sitting here today in the beautiful Coombe Cottage in the Yarra Valley. This was built by the famous Australian opera singer Dame Nellie Melba in 1911. It doesn't really feel like a cottage. It's a huge house filled with signed photographs of famous people and Royals, beautiful, paintings, chandeliers, decorative furniture, interesting things everywhere you look.

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She was the first Australian opera singer to gain international recognition and she had a lot of famous and influential friends. Sometimes she could have hundreds of people coming to her house to have dinner parties, and she used to entertain them here in this beautiful ballroom of her cottage.

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At the height of her career, she was one of the most famous women in the world. She really was like the Beyoncé of the 1900s.

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When World War One started in 1914, it really shook the whole world and Melba was affected by that and started a lot of fundraising efforts.

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Knowing a lot of famous artists and writers, she asked them if they would donate some work to put together into a book, which was called the Melba Gift Book.

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The book was published in 1915 to raise money for the Belgian people who were displaced because of the war, and it's full of artwork, stories and poetry from the time.

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Today I'd like you to make an artwork based on one of the paintings in the Melba Gift Book. The painting I've chosen is by Ellis Rowan and it's called *A Wild Garden*. The original painting of this is held at the Yarra Rangers Regional Museum in Lilydale. I love it because it's called *A Wild Garden*, even though it's just a natural place and I really like the idea of nature just being perfect the way it is. So we're going to base our art activity today on this painting.

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For my wild garden. I've used collage. I've used lots of bright colours so it can stand out. But remember this is your picture so you make it your own. It doesn't have to look like mine. Make it unique to you. You might even want to get together with your friends and put all your pictures together and make your own Gift Book. So have fun.