

LIVE MUSIC

JILL BARBER: CELEBRATING THE HOMEMAKERS

By Andrea Gunn

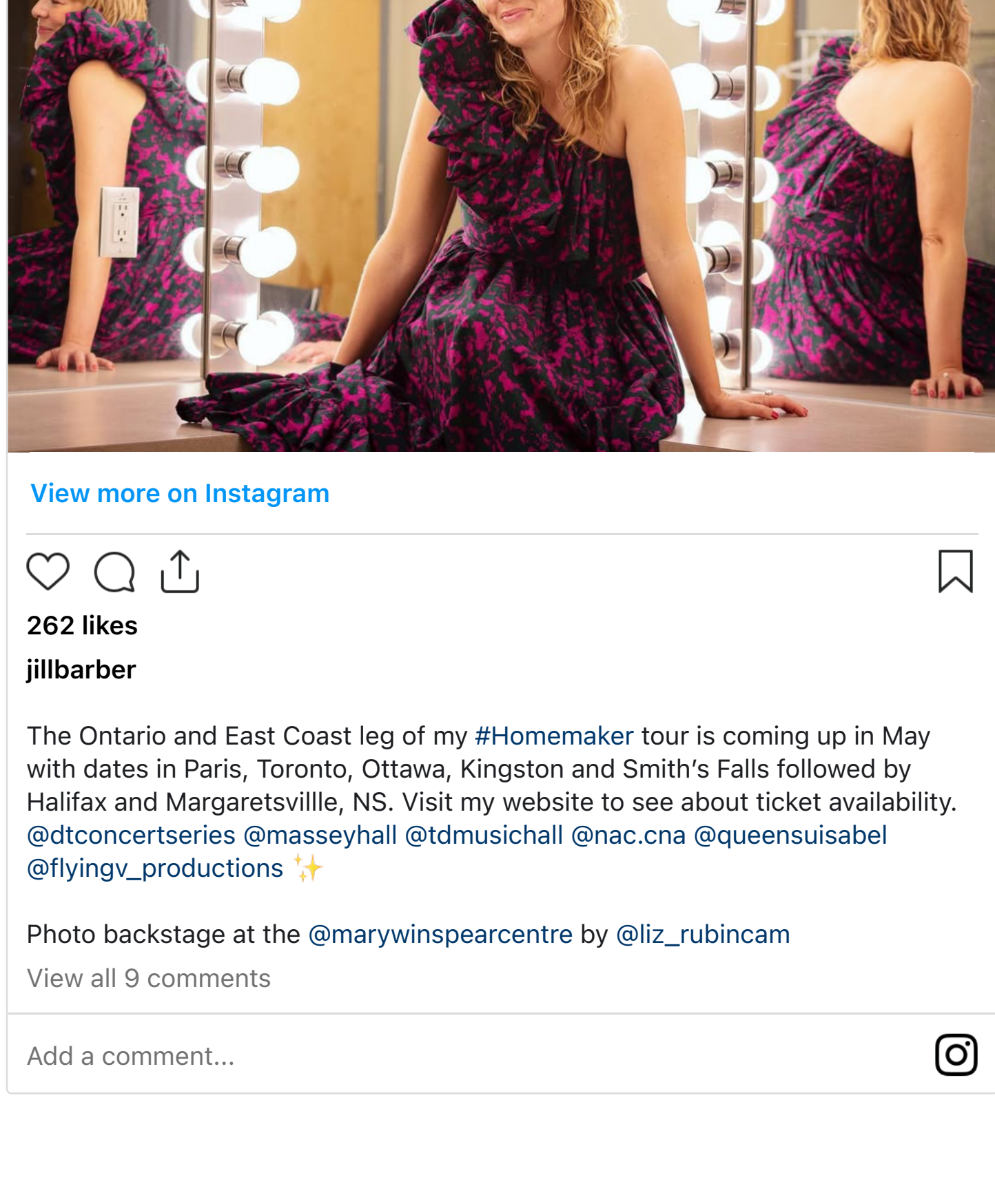
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ON MOTHER'S DAY, JILL BARBER RETURNS TO KINGSTON TO PERFORM SONGS FROM HER INTIMATE NEW ALBUM, HOMEMAKER.

To celebrate Jill Barber's return to Kingston on Mother's Day, we are offering a package including two tickets to Jill's concert at the Isabel and a one-night stay at one of these participating hotels: [The Rosemount Inn](#), [Green Acres Inn](#), [Donald Gordon Hotel](#), and [Delta Hotels by Marriott Kingston Waterfront](#). Each hotel stay also comes with its own special treat for mom: [explore all the packages](#).

When Jill Barber was 16 years old, she visited her brother Matthew in Kingston, where he was a student at Queen's. During their visit, Matthew took Jill to the Grad Club, where there was an open mic night. Jill got up on the stage and sang "In the road," a song by Weeping Tile, one of her favourite bands. It was her very first live music performance.

Jill would go on to perform many more times at the Grad Club and at other venues in Kingston, before she went on to national fame. The three-time Juno award-nominated singer-songwriter is known for both her folk-pop and jazz styles. Among her critically acclaimed musical releases is 2017's *The Family Album*, in collaboration with Matthew, which won the 2017 Juno award for contemporary roots album of the year. Jill is also known for singles like the very catchy "Girl's gotta do" from her 2018 album *Metaphora*.



This past February, Jill released a new album, *Homemaker*, an album that takes her back to her folk roots. *Homemaker* explores Jill's own life as a mother and a musician; it provides her the platform to address, through her whip-smart lyrics, both the beauty in life's quiet moments and societal assumptions about women. It also, in one song, celebrates Jill's own mother.

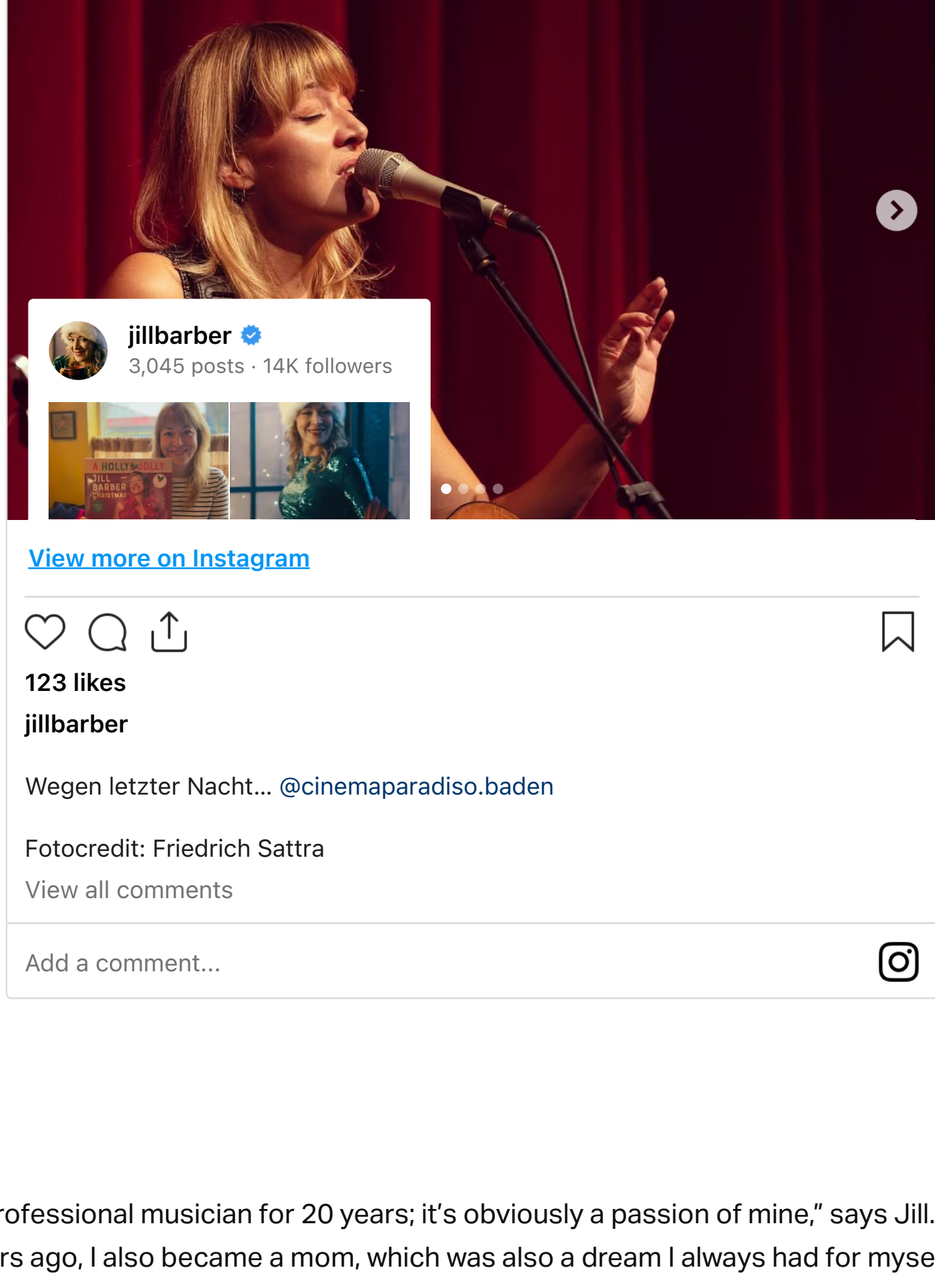
I'd know that writing anywhere
I've seen it all my life
You never miss the chance to send a card
For a birthday or a birth or an anniversary
It's your way of saying that I'm with you where you are

This is how the song "A mother's hand" opens. Jill wrote it as a birthday present to her mom when she realized that she had forgotten to send a birthday card.

And I'm sorry I forgot to send a card
I've been so busy with the kids
And working in between
That keeping up with details has been hard

The song celebrates the emotions that burst forward from little details, like seeing a recipe written in the handwriting of someone you love.

There's a certain recognition
Any child can understand
There's comfort in what's written
In my mother's hand



"I've been a professional musician for 20 years; it's obviously a passion of mine," says Jill. "Then just under ten years ago, I also became a mom, which was also a dream I always had for myself. And sometimes the demands of being a touring musician can be at odds with the demands of parenthood and domesticity. The tension between my two selves came to a head when the whole world shut down [due to COVID] and the rug was pulled out from under me – and all gigging musicians. And I thought, 'If I am not a performing musician, am I just a homemaker?' So, I spent my time writing these songs and recording this album trying to get rid of that "just" – and actually celebrating what it means to be a person who makes a home for other people, take care of other people, and allow them to thrive."

On the song "Homemaker," Jill sings:

Homemaker, it's okay
If today, the only thing you make
Is you make it through the day

"We all know that much of this work is unpaid and unseen," says Jill. "But it's almost the most important, foundational work that has to happen in order for our society to function and be healthy. "We've seen that recognition for frontline health-care workers, people looking after other people. But I think it's time for us to celebrate and uplift homemakers of all stripes – and not just parents, but all the people who care for other people."

A couple of kids to raise
And never get any praise
Just a sideways glance
I might've screwed it up today
I didn't mean for it to go that way
Another day's another chance



Jill's excited to be back on tour and performing in front of a live audience again. On this tour's first show, in Whitehorse, she says, "There was certainly a feeling in the room of deep connection and community, and there were even some tears. I think that with this album, I am digging into some personal, vulnerable, and I think – *relatable* – struggles of what it is to be a homemaker." As she sings on "Beautiful life,"

So what? I'm not picture-perfect
It's messy but it's working just the way it is
So what? It's the scars that make us
There's beauty in the chaos of how we really live

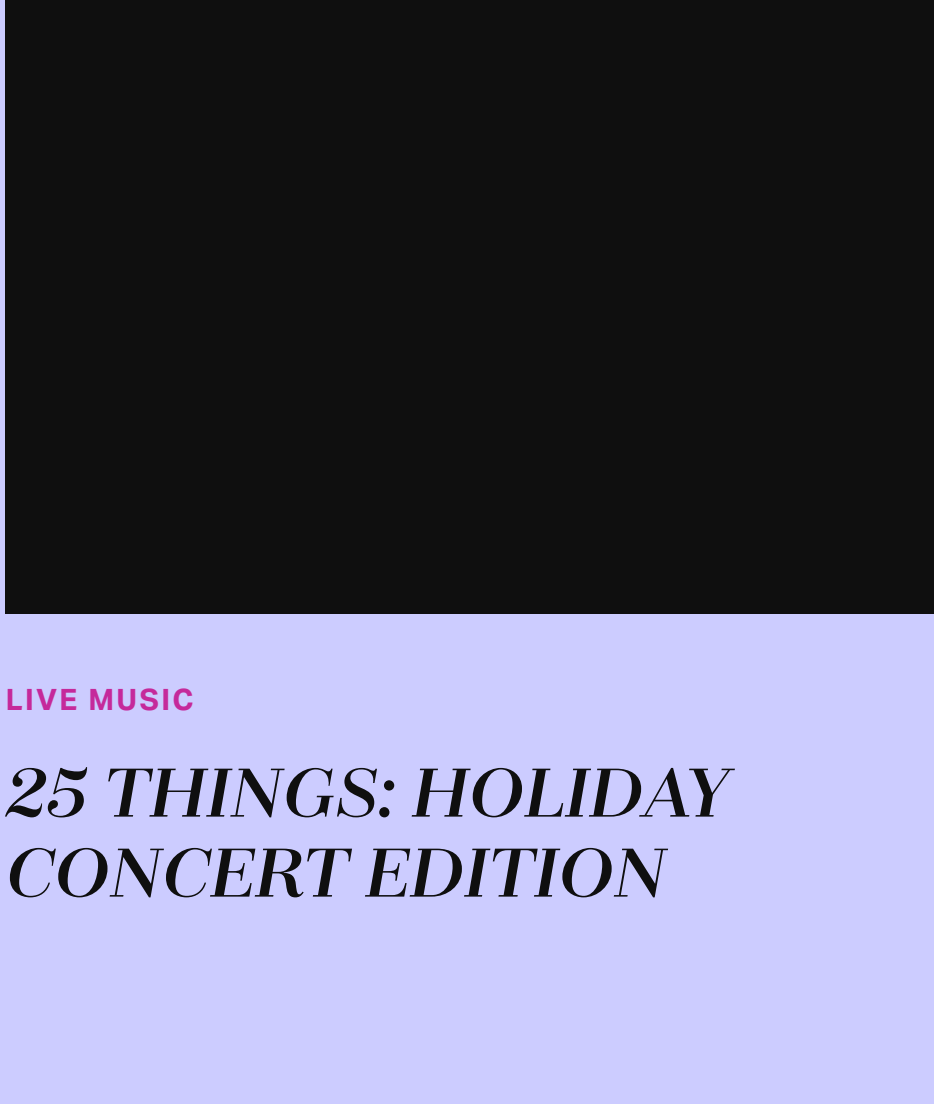
Jill is really looking forward to her return to Kingston: she'll perform at the Isabel Bader Centre on Sunday, May 14, which is Mother's Day. Jill's own mother will be in the audience and Jill hopes that others will bring their moms to the Kingston show, to celebrate, together, the homemakers in their lives.

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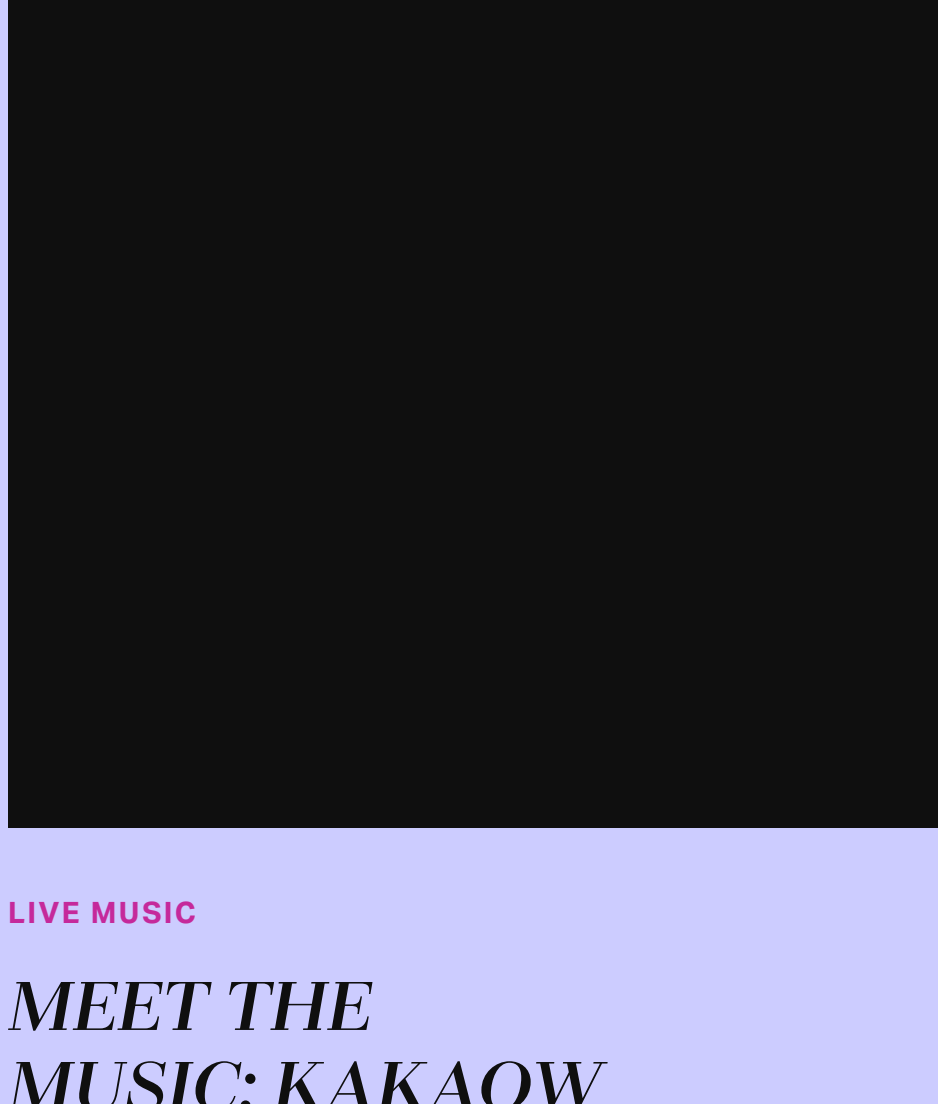


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