The Ensemble

By Aja Gabel

1. What did you think of the multi-perspective point of view? Did you feel each character was distinct?
2. Why do you think Gabel chose to start the book in the 1990s? How does featuring a story in that era make it different from setting it in present day?
3. These characters are constantly drawn to each other, mainly for music but also for a feeling of family. In your opinion, why do you think they couldn’t quit each other?
4. Do you think Henry should have gone solo? Why do you think he couldn’t make that move?
5. How did becoming a father change Henry and the rest of the group?
6. We learn quite a bit about each character's background. Let’s focus on each one—Jana, Brit, Daniel and Henry—and how it shaped who they became.
7. Why was Brit so drawn to Daniel? Do you think he truly loved her in the end?
8. It was interesting that none of their parents, minus Brit, seemed to understand their child’s passion for classical music. Why do you think that is?
9. Have you played an instrument or been part of a group like this?
10. Let’s talk about where we see each character go from here. Will Henry ever play again with the group?
11. How does the concept of family appear in this book?
12. Did a knowledge of classical music enhance your reading experience? Or was it not necessary? (Did you look up the songs as you read?
13. What did you think of Kimiko having her own chapter?
14. How do you think the characters approach ambition and creativity?
15. Was anything surprising to you about the life of working musicians? How was it different or expected than what you previously thought?