

Episode 5

After the Applause



Hello, I'm Richard Winterbottom.

Welcome to Season Two, Episode Five of Rick's Bite-Sized English.

Each week we examine a word or phrase that you can take away to try to build your English and your confidence.

There's a new episode every week, so make sure you follow so you don't miss out.

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‘Yes’, the man shouted. ‘Come on!’

He stood in the aisle, overcome, face flushed with euphoria, raising his arms, encouraging the audience to join in.

A few seconds before, the final jubilant chords of Brahms’ third symphony had sounded. The hall became utterly still, silent. Then the man erupted, insistent that the audience share his excitement.

It had been an exhilarating performance, and the audience reacted with fervent clapping that seemed as if it would never stop.

The conductor took her bows, the lead violinist along with the principal clarinetist and cellist shared the moments. And on the applause went.

Finally, the clapping subsided and people started looking for coats, umbrellas, hats, bags.

As the applause faded, one person was motionless. In one of the front rows sat a young man, his head in his hands. He stared straight ahead at the stage as the orchestra packed their instruments away and left. He was the last to leave.

He walked away slowly and left the building. He walked through the dark, glistening streets where a downpour had drenched the city earlier that evening, his thoughts to himself, the music still resounding in his head. At one set of traffic lights he had to be pulled back by a pedestrian as he appeared to walk straight on into the oncoming traffic.

Max was a piano teacher. He also tuned pianos for the extra cash. He lived alone a few blocks away.

He reached his apartment building and took the lift up to the fifth floor. He fumbled for his keys, his impatience to get home battling with his tiredness.

Walter, his black cat, wrapped himself around his legs but Max paid him no attention. He went straight through to the living room and opened his piano.

He sat down and began to play. The notes sounded different to anything he had ever produced before. He

played the piece again. By morning, he had completed the first movement of a piano sonata.

Over the next few nights he didn't sleep, but sat at the piano, a man obsessed. By day, he struggled to stay awake in his classes. By the end of the week he had produced the three movements of his piano sonata, a piece that went beyond anything he had ever achieved before.



A little more than one year later, he was in the audience to watch it premiered in his home town. He listened to the opening notes, feeling for the first time that the music was no longer only his own.

Seventeen minutes later, the concert hall burst into applause. Max sat back, only now realising what he had managed to do.

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At the end of the story, Max is listening to the first performance of his piano sonata. As the performance finishes we hear that only now does Max realise what he has managed to do. Managed to do. Why does he use this language? Well, we have seen how Max worked for many nights alone at his piano to produce this piece of music, hardly sleeping or eating and ending up exhausted. In other words, he has done something difficult, he has achieved something important. 'Manage to' is used in situations like this, to express the difficulty in what someone has done.

It refers to the ability to accomplish a task or goal, especially when it's challenging, involves effort, and possibly suggests overcoming difficulties.

Note the form: manage plus infinitive with 'to'.

Of course, I know that many of you will have seen this piece of language many times and all be familiar with it. But do you use it? Try to incorporate it into your spoken language to add that extra detail when talking about people completing difficult tasks or overcoming challenges.

Let me know how you will use this language by leaving a rating and review wherever you listen to the podcast.

I'd love to hear from you.

Thanks for listening.

See you next week.

