# Come On, Get 'Appy!

## By Phyllis Thomas

This is the first in a series of app reviews for Activate! Included is a great app for learning about classical music, a rhythm app, and a classroom management tool. Whether you have classroom access to a single smartphone/tablet, have a class set, or work in a one-to-one setting, these apps are worth checking out.

#### **My First Classical Music App**

Naxos Digital Services, Ltd. Author: Genevieve Helsby; Illustrator: Jason Chapman \$4.99

**iPhone:** https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/my-first-classical-music-app/id530616330?mt=8

iPad: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/my-first-classical-music-app/id470865535?mt=8

**Android:** https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.pgs.mfcma.phone&feature=search\_result#?t=W251bGwsMSwyLDEsImNvbS5wZ3MubWZjbWEucGhvbmUiXQ

This is an interactive version of *My First Classical Music Book*, published by Naxos, the world's largest independent, classical-record company. A wonderful introduction to classical music, *My First Classical Music App* is full of information, and has beautiful graphics, engaging narration, and the high-quality recordings you would expect from Naxos. Tap any of the words and pictures to hear the text narrated, listen to music excerpts, or start an animation or sound effect. If you are able to project the app, it can be used for whole-class instruction. It



can also be used in small groups or centers on one or more devices, or explored by individual students. One reviewer wrote, "This app sets the bar for others that call themselves 'educational."

The "Welcome" page explains how to navigate the app, using the forward and back arrows and tapping the home icon to go to the "Contents" page. You can see how the animation works when you touch either the text or a picture. You also meet the Music Bird, which talks about the music, may ask you to listen for something, or asks a question.

The content is organized into three sections: "When? Where?," "People," and "Instruments."

The "When? Where?" section contains six pages about when and where you may hear music. In this section, you can read about and listen to music from television, the movies, the ballet, the concert hall, weddings, and the theater.

In the "People" section, you learn delightful anecdotes about eight famous composers (Handel, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, and Adams) and can listen to one of their compositions.

The "Instruments" section contains pages for instruments of the string, brass, woodwind, percussion, and keyboard families. The text explains how the instruments are played, and each page contains a recording of a composition that features the discussed instrument.

Near the end of the app is a list of details and audio of the musical tracks it contains, followed by a composer pronunciation guide. The music is available on *My First Classical Album*, which may be downloaded in the iTunes store for \$4.99.

I have developed a set of worksheets to use with this app. You may wish to print and copy the worksheets for your students to complete as they explore the app individually or in small groups. There is one worksheet for each section of the app.

## **Rhythm Cat Lite**

Ready, Set, Learn

LMuse Ltd. Lite version is free Pro version is \$3.99 for iPad and \$2.99 for iPhone and Android

iPhone: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rhythm-cat-learn-to-read-music/id488167475?mt=8

iPad: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rhythm-cat-lite-hd/id505012140?mt=8

**Android:** https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.stockmusicboutique.

rhythmcatlite&feature=more\_from\_developer#?t=W251bGwsMSwyLDEwMiwiY29tLnN0b2NrbXVzaWNib3V 0aXF1ZS5yaHI0aG1jYXRsaXRIII0

*Rhythm Cat Lite* is the free version of an app that teaches students to read and perform standard rhythmic notation. The audio is of great quality, and in a variety of musical styles, instruments, voices, meters, and tempi. Also, the graphics are engaging, with a different rhythm cat or cats at each level.

There are fifteen levels that become increasingly more difficult, with one rhythmic example of four, eight, twelve, or sixteen measures at each level. A level must be performed correctly in order to advance to the next level. Note values



include eighth notes; quarter notes and rests; half notes; dotted half notes; and whole notes. The notation of level 10 is in  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter, while all the other patterns are written in  $\frac{4}{4}$ .

At level 1, step-by-step instructions are given detailing how to play. As a new note value, rest, or time signature is added, it is explained in a pop-up at the beginning of the level. Tapping **Want to learn more** opens a Wikipedia page that covers the new element. When the player closes the instructional pop-up, the rhythmic notation is displayed. Selecting **Play** starts the background audio. After a measure is counted (1-2-3-4 or 1-2-3) on the screen, the player performs the rhythm by tapping a green button. The app is a little sensitive and requires precision, and it seems to work best when the rhythm is performed with a little weight. (I use my right-hand thumb.) Levels



13–15 add a blue button, which is used to play quarter notes or eighth notes on the lower left. When a note is played in time, it turns from black to green. A mistake causes the note to remain black. Each level is passed with a score of between one and three stars, or is failed if there are too many mistakes.

Used in a classroom setting, the app would work best with headphones. When a new student opens the app, the game may be reset under "Options," which locks all but the first level. This app serves to reinforce rhythmic skills in a fun way. Students learn to read ahead and listen to stay with the background audio track.

The Pro version contains sixty levels, some of which add a third button.

### ClassDojo

Class Twist, Inc. Free

> iPhone: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/classdojo-for-teachers/id552602056?mt=8 iPad: https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/classdojo-for-teachers/id552602056?mt=8

**Android:** https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.classdojo.android&feature=search\_result#?t= W251bGwsMSwyLDEsImNvbS5jbGFzc2Rvam8uYW5kcm9pZCJd

*ClassDojo* helps teachers improve specific classroom behavior by awarding real-time feedback in the form of points. The app helps save time by recording behaviors and accomplishments right in class, with just one click—no extra data entry required. The students can receive instant feedback, and the app syncs to the main *ClassDojo* website (http://www. classdojo.com). The data generated can be shared with classroom teachers, parents, and administrators.



To use the app, set up a free account on the website. Then select **Show Me Around** to learn more about the app's functionality. When you se-

lect **Start a Class**, you can choose whether to display the website page in class, so that the students can see (and hear) it. A ding (played through computer speakers) lets the students know that a point has been awarded or taken away. Points awarded can be positive or negative, with default set at being on task, participating, and working hard. These can be customized for your classes in the "Settings" page. You may also choose to award multiple students at the same time. At the end of class, you can view each student's profile by selecting it from the list. Reports may be printed, and parent access can be turned on. An Apple or Android device can be used as a *ClassDojo* remote to award points. This can be set up from the computer, once you have signed in, in the section under "Connect your mobile."

Using a computer, connect with the website to add classes and students, of which there can be any number. Names can be typed, or class lists may be copied and pasted. The extensive frequently asked questions section under "Help" can answer most questions about using the site, editing classes, preparing reports, and customizing awards. When you're ready to begin using *ClassDojo* with your classes, there is a short video to show your students, under "Play student video."

You may wish to set point achievement levels to reward students. For instance, if you begin by assigning the same avatars for each student, once a student collects fifty points, he/she may be able to customize his/her avatar. You may also wish to offer a music pencil, the opportunity to be first at the IWB, or to chance to sit by a friend for the day. Check out some of the success stories shared by teachers on the *ClassDojo* website.