



## instructor corner

Sean Corbett, B.M.E., Voice Instructor

## Is Perfect Pitch Actually Perfect

Have you ever met someone who is able to identify a note being played without having any context to the music? Absolute pitch, commonly known as perfect pitch, is often found amongst musicians. I personally like to refer to "perfect pitch" as absolute pitch, because, like we've all heard throughout our lives, nothing is perfect! The Cambridge Dictionary defines absolute as "... the same in all situations and *not depending on anything else*." There are actually three different versions of this skill: absolute pitch, relative pitch, and quasi absolute pitch.

So, what is AP (absolute pitch) and how does it compare to relative pitch? AP means that someone can label a pitch without a reference note. Relative pitch refers to labeling a pitch in relation to a previously given note. Many adults that claim to have AP say they began learning an instrument around the ages 4-7, which is the prime time for brain plasticity. At this young age, students learn keys with

little to no sharps or flats. This common experience is why many people tend to have AP when it comes to natural notes but struggle identifying pitches that are sharp or flat. Making sure that a student's instrument is tuned can also affect a musician's AP later on!

The last version of AP is called quasi absolute pitch. When I was 15, I really enjoyed "Bird Song" by Florence + the Machine. The first pitch of the song, Florence sings a C4 (middle C). I was able to memorize that pitch in context of a song. Now, I use C4 as a reference pitch to identify/sing other pitches! This is an example of QAP (quasi absolute pitch). Another interesting factor of QAP is being sensitive to different timbres (instruments) or certain pitch octaves.

Everyone's experience is very personalized and no matter how many studies we do, we will never truly understand all there is to AP. However, just like any skill, absolute pitch is a craft that can be honed.

## upcoming events



JAN  
14

Winter Recital  
@ UIW



JAN  
25

Olivia Spencer's  
Birthday

## congratulations!

2023 SAMA Instructor of the  
Year is piano instructor,  
Leslie Vela!



## student of the month

Emily G.

has been coming to SAMA for a few years, and she's come out of her shell in a fantastic way. She's grown not only as a musician but as a young person. I especially appreciate her bravery, humor, and musicianship. She recently joined her middle school choir and has been doing awesome in that as well, learning different things music and collaborating with her peers."



Khadijah Jabbar, B.M., Voice Instructor