

## Abstract

**Absolute pitch. Concrete memory for sound.** (Absolut gehör. Konkret minne för ljud.)

Doctoral dissertation in Swedish, 340 pages. Summary in English.

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*Key words:* absolute pitch, relative pitch, learning, absolute timbre, absolute relative pitch, music learning, talent, aural abilities, music psychology.

This thesis deals with the subject of absolute pitch (AP) from a perspective of music psychology. Several new hypotheses and findings concerning this phenomenon are presented. As a frame to the detailed discussion on AP, a general model for analysis of human abilities and a theory of natural human learning are presented. Other kinds of aural abilities in music, such as relative pitch, and different kinds of timbre-based aural abilities are also described and discussed in varying detail.

AP has been subject to investigations within psychology and music psychology since late 19th century. Although several theories regarding why some individuals develop this ability, while most don't, have been presented during this time, there has not been put forward any hypothesis or explanation of how this acquisition or learning of AP actually happens. In this thesis an explanation of how AP is learned is presented. AP learning is explained as a result of a specific general approach to musical and non-musical activities. With this kind of approach AP is developed in individuals more or less automatically. This approach is described in detail. However, for most people over the age of 7 to 8 years, this approach to activities in general is difficult to assume. The main reason for this difficulty is explained as being due to their preference for an opposite approach to activities and learning in general. For a minority of the population the easy-AP-learning approach is the preference in all activities and learning situations. Because of this, they develop AP if they are engaged in musical activities.

There are different kinds of AP, which here are called *vocal-AP*, *instrumental-AP* and *listening-AP*. The differences between these kinds of AP are described. There are also three *modes* of AP-ability, here called *active production*, *identification* and *inner hearing*. These three modes of AP, how they are related to each other, and their functions are described.

This thesis is mainly the result of a quasi-phenomenological study of aural abilities in music.