

## Website Bio

Aaron D. McMichael- (b. 1979, Biloxi, MS) after he graduated Long Beach High School in Long Beach, Mississippi he worked and earned his Associate of Arts (Jones County Junior College), Bachelor of Music Education (Troy State University), Master's in Music Education (University of Texas at Brownsville) and is currently working on his Doctoral of Arts in Music Education Degree (William Carey University). While studying for his undergraduate degree, he was also a member of The Cavaliers and The Boston Crusaders Drum and Bugle Corps. After graduating from Troy State University, he went to Texas to teach at various schools, including Victoria ISD, Mission ISD, San Benito CISD, Mercedes ISD, Brownsville ISD, and Progreso ISD. During his time at these schools, he has garnered different accolades. In marching band: Division I and area qualifying bands with Victoria, San Benito, Mercedes, and Progreso. During the concert season, he has taught over 22 years of students who have advanced to All-Region MS and HS bands, both at the ATSSB level and the 5A/6A level. He has also assisted students who qualified for Area and Solo & Ensemble at the local and state levels. During the concert season, Mr. McMichael has directed many sweepstakes bands, including the Mercedes Freshman Band, Mercedes Concert Band, which achieved Harrell Middle School's first-ever sweepstakes, Faulk Middle School's first Sub Non-Varsity Sweepstakes, and the Progreso High School Bands' first sweepstakes. Currently, he has 15 J.W. Pepper Editors Choices, Grand Mesa Grade 4 Winner, ATSSB Composition Runner Up, and 5 Texas PML pieces. He currently lives with his wife, son, two dogs, and a turtle.

## Why I compose

When I was a student at Troy State University, I took my first composition class with Robert W. Smith and Ralph Ford. That course was my first real opportunity to write music in an academic setting, and it gave me the freedom to experiment. I started by arranging pieces, and I remember my first assignment vividly—an arrangement of "Kiss the Girl" from Disney, written for marching band using Finale, which was my very first notation program back in 2002. At the time, I was just beginning, and honestly, I didn't think I had the skills to be a real composer. After the class ended, I told myself that maybe writing music just wasn't for me.

Years later, around 2009, I was asked to write marching band arrangements for Weslaco High School and Progreso High School. I gave it my best shot, but again, I felt like I was in over my head. I questioned why I kept saying yes to something I wasn't sure I was good at. But something changed around 2018. Instead of trying to arrange existing music, I decided to go back to composing original pieces—this time focusing on music for young bands.

Most of my teaching career has been spent in programs that didn't have the ideal resources. I've worked with bands that lacked instruments, consistent staffing, and access to the kind of music that matched the high standards we see across Texas. I'd scroll through the Texas PML and find great music—but not always the right music for the unique challenges my students faced. So I started writing what I felt was missing. I composed pieces from scratch, with the hope that they would someday help other directors and students who were in the same position I had been in for most of my career.

In 2019, after spending the summer writing and refining several pieces, I took a leap and went to the Texas Bandmasters Association convention to try and get my music published. Most companies turned me down, and one rejection from a fellow Troy graduate really stung—he told me my music just wasn't sophisticated enough. But rather than let that stop me, I let it drive me. That criticism lit a fire under me, and not long after, I landed my first publishing deal with Carl Fischer, thanks to editor Mike Tatem who took a chance on me.

Since then, I've been fortunate to sign with Carl Fischer, Tux People's Music, and On the Field Music. Several of my pieces have been named J.W. Pepper Editor's Choice selections, and some have even made it onto the Texas PML—a full-circle moment I never saw coming back in 2002.

I write music because I believe every student, no matter their school size or resources, deserves access to music that challenges them, inspires them, and helps them sound their best. There's still a real need for band music that meets young players where they are, without sacrificing quality or heart. That's why I keep composing—and why I'm more passionate about it now than ever before.