"Decision Height" is a play written by Meredith Dayna Levy, set during World War II, and tells the story of six women who are training to become Women Airforce Service Pilots. Going from a ragtag group of individuals that had to compete to figure out who gets to sleep in which bunk to an inseparable sisterhood, this play follows this group of women through their adversities with each other, the camp and instructors around them, and the strife of the World amidst the Second Great War. These heroines face not only the disapproval of their husbands and other male figures but also the consequences of trying to exist in a male field, illustrated by the very uniforms they initially receive being tailor made for men. Throughout the play, the women have their minds, bodies, and bonds tested by the camp and the world around them in cases of relatives dead or missing as a result of the war, trying to sneak around the strict rules of a military camp, an overly misogynistic flight instructor, and even the departure of two individuals from this sisterhood. Throughout all of this, the girls are able to keep their heads held high and the four that make it through graduation go on to be successful pilots.

The production debuted in 2014 but takes place in the years 1943 and 1944. Levy is proud to deliver plays that feature the hard work of women on and off the stage, and the use of the WASP program accomplish this tenfold. It is no wonder that this play received national attention upon release for its praise of the brave women pilots in spite of every adversity holding them back. This production has many great themes to pull inspiration from and bring focus to the time. My intent is to focus on bringing the sound of the World War II time period and military camp atmosphere to life in this production along with highlighting the classic American tunes sung by the women in this training program.

Something that this production does very well is making the most out of stage space. Throughout the play, some characters will read letters they are writing to loved ones, appear in television commercials, or simply hop onto a PA System. To further accentuate these moments, I would make it a goal to send these vocal inputs through effects and filters that could produce a sound reminiscent of how letters are read by an off-screen individual on TV or like they’re coming out of a 1940s television or PA. These are very important to the story as the change from dry vocals to something that has an effect will keep audience attention and help immerse them in the program and will help listeners differentiate when a character is part of a scene or on stage in their own world. To further solidify this image, the radio show and various songs played on the radio will have the same radio effect to make it sound like the audience is listening to these announcements at Avenger Field as opposed to in a theater audience. By giving sound the feeling of coming from a time period, audiences will be more immersed in the world of the production.

Something else I’d like to focus on is the patriotism exhibited by all of the women in this production through the classic songs they sing and modulate throughout the production. I find this to be very symbolic of perseverance in addition to their well illustrated patriotism because although the lyrics tell stories of trials and tribulations, the melodies remain the same, something that symbolizes the American way of moving forward and overcoming adversity. This is relevant to the production and audience because the music played during these scenes will help keep the cast in time with one another and also help audience members feel the sense of American pride in their seats.

The last thing I’d focus on in this production is bringing the sound of the planes to life. By experimenting with different volumes and reverb levels, the planes can be differentiated between being in the air or waiting in the hangar. For as important as airplanes and piloting is in this production, it would be a detriment to not have the sounds of piloting and the eventual crashes and burns throughout. This is important because it helps the audience experience what these pilots are going through on a day to day basis as well as the few tragedies throughout and will keep them immersed in the world of Avenger Field.

“Decision Height” is a play that overflows with sound design potential. From the many diegetic sounds featured in the production to the many opportunities to immerse audience members in the world of this production, just like with these female pilots, the sky's the limit from a sound design perspective as well. By incorporating these elements into the play, listeners will be able to experience Avenger Field with this cast of characters.