Section A: Machaut

1. What were 14th-century patrons getting for their money when they received a manuscript of Machaut’s works? Make detailed reference to at least ONE manuscript.

2. ‘But if the sweet music pleased me, the words brought me more joy than anyone could conceive.’ (Remede de Fortune, trans. Wimsatt and Kibler)

To what extent are these aesthetic values communicated through the musico-poetic forms of Machaut’s songs. Make reference to at least ONE form (balade, rondeau, virelai).

3. ‘The fourteenth-century French motet is perhaps the ultimate insider’s art, creating symbolic webs of text and music that interact with one another, and with other works of literature and music, in interesting ways. Indeed, sometimes it almost appears that the creators of these motets are purposefully obtuse, trying to prevent the casual reader or listener from receiving the full benefit of the piece. This attitude may seem strange to a modern listener, but it is in keeping with the medieval idea that the highest forms of music are unheard.’ (Alice Clark) Discuss with reference to Machaut’s motets and analytical approaches to them.

Section B: Historically Informed Performance

4. Was Richard Taruskin (1995) right to berate early-music performers for an ‘infantile dependency’ on divining the composer’s intentions? Illustrate your answer with reference to ONE OR MORE of the works/repertories studied for this topic, and to recordings of these works/repertories.

5. You are asked to present a pre-performance talk before a period-instrument performance of ONE OF: seventeenth-century English song; Beethoven symphonies; Monteverdi’s Vespers; Bach’s St John Passion; Handel’s Messiah. Write down what you would talk about, including references to some or all of the following as appropriate: organology, sources and notation, tempi, tempo relationships, musical direction, performing forces, articulation, pitch, ornamentation, and anything else you feel is relevant.

6. According to The Spectator in May 2017, there are ‘Harpsichordists at War’ as Andreas Staier criticises Mahan Esfahani that ‘his figured bass realisation was not up to the
complexity of English and French music of the 17th and 18th centuries’. In what ways does the judgment of the performance of unwritten, improvised practices differ from that of the performance of written-out compositions?

Section C: Women and Music in the Nineteenth Century

7. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of studying women’s music in the 19th century separately (i.e., as “Women and Music in the 19th Century”) vs. in integration (i.e., within a course on “Music in the 19th Century”). If you were in charge of designing the Prelims curriculum, would you preserve things as they are or advocate for change?

8. How did 19th-century critics gender musical works as ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’? How did composers respond to their critiques?

9. Opera is the ‘undoing of women’. Comment.

Section D: Musical Multimedia

10. In the conclusion to their book on the invention of the synthesizer, Trevor Pinch and Frank Trocco make the claim that ‘technologies are never neutral; they are always embedded in and generated by a cultural context, and the most important cultural context is that of use’.

How can this be applied to the study of musical multimedia more generally? Make reference to at least TWO multimedia sites in your answer.

11. In a 1988 article, Andrew Goodwin comments that ‘attending a live performance…these days is often roughly the experience of watching a small, noisy TV set in a large, crowded field’.

What does it mean for media to be ‘live’? How has this shaped our understanding of (and the development of) musical multimedia?

12. In his 2014 article, Jonathan Sterne provocatively states, ‘There is no music industry’. Engage with this viewpoint to understand how power relations can be understood in a multimodal discourse, referring to at least TWO different multimedia sites.