

Rolling over your repertoire - "How many new songs does your chorus learn in a year?"

This question was posted to the director's listserv and he answers help to show that, while ideas and suggestions are always helpful, it is up to you to figure out how your chorus best absorbs new material and then to plan to their strengths.

- "I try to teach a new song after I feel the previous one has notes learned. Then I spend part of the rehearsal working on the new song, part learning a newer song, and part going over old repertoire. This works out to a new song about every 6 weeks, and it takes about that long before I take it out for a performance. Do you think this is too much? I have a feeling I am going to lose a couple of older men who don't want to take the extra time to learn new songs. They want to come on Tuesday night and not do anything at home. Unfortunately they are getting up in years and one night of practice is not going to do it for them."
- "We have purposely tried to set out to learn nine new songs per year, not including Christmas songs (2 new ones this year). In actual practice, it probably won't work out to that schedule due to lack of individual preparation. In theory, that is one new song each month, with the exception of December (Christmas performances) March & April (contest preparation)."
- "We usually learn between 4 and 6 new songs each year. Normally, they all will be used for the annual show. I think any more than that would put us into a "constant" learning mode with no time to really perfect anything. These may be totally new songs we have never done before or they could be some that were done 5 or so years ago and not currently in the repertoire. Sometimes it's amazing to find out that we didn't actually learn the song well the last time around. It's now a totally different song!"
- "Our chorus learns 12-16 per year depending on the type of show we have and how hard they are. We try to introduce 2-3 songs every two months. This keeps our better readers interested and encourages regular attendance. We use learning tapes but even at that if you miss very many your behind."
- "We have tried as many as 6 new songs in a year's time, but that was too many for our gang to swallow. We still performed them for a show, but several of them then went into the files, and haven't come out again. Too much hard work, and we were really not secure in several of them to include in other events. We have since held to no more than 4 new songs in any given year."
- "The number of new songs we learn in a year varies with the difficulty, naturally. While we may set our sights higher, I don't usually expect more than 6 new songs per year. This year it was less than that. We have an extensive repertoire, and many songs have choreography that must be reviewed and refined so the numbers don't get stale."
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- "The X chorus typically tries to learn 8- 9 songs excluding any of the "pole cat" type songs. (Yes, we still sing and quartet pole cats...and love it). If we haven't learned all of the music by crunch time, I'll assign an "ensemble" or quartet to learn and sing any left over songs for the show. Sometimes the chorus, after hearing the ensemble, will learn the song afterwards."